THE EL SALVADOR NIGHTMARE—*THE EDITORS*

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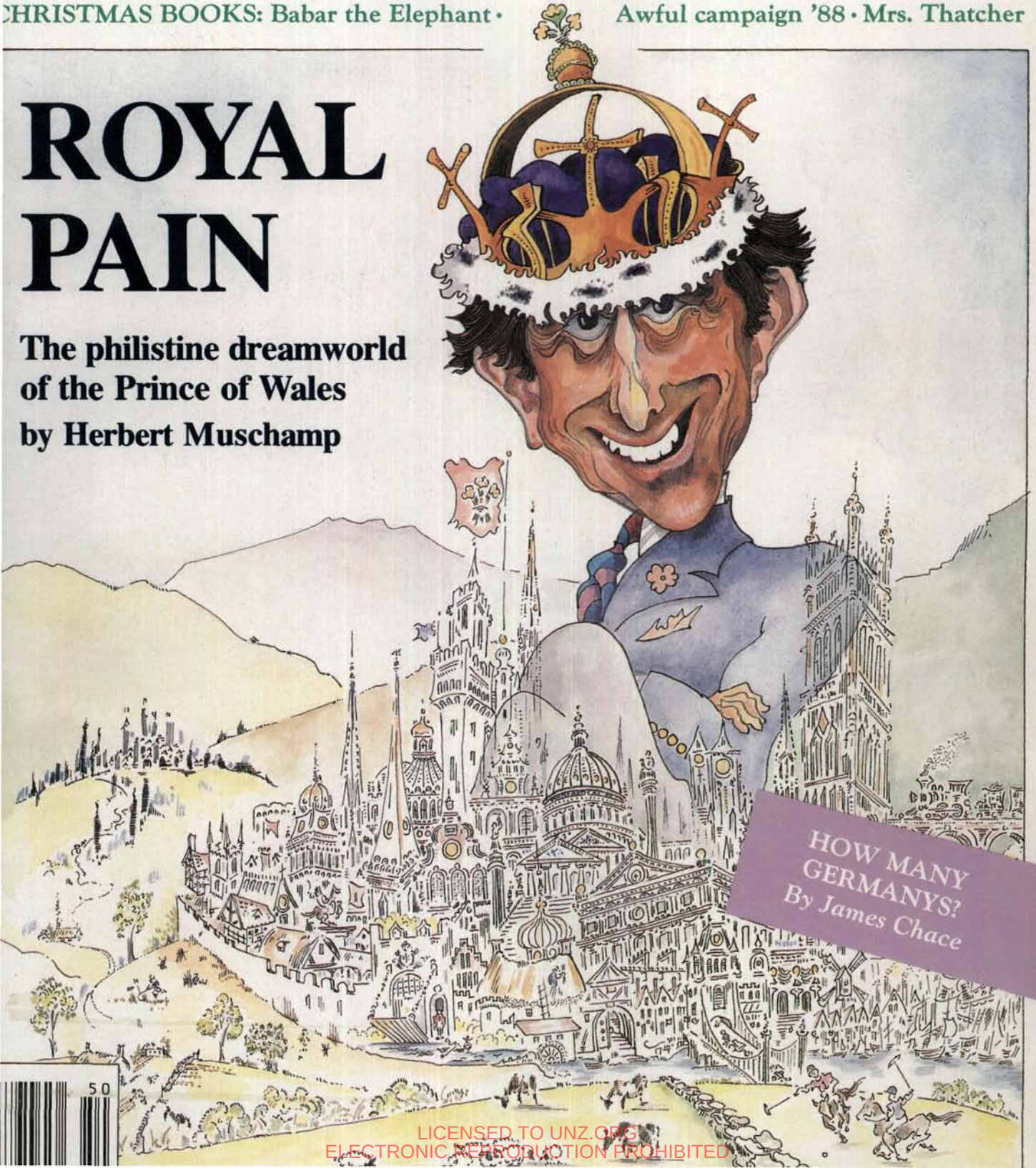

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
A Weekly Journal of Opinion

DECEMBER 11, 1989

FOUNDED 1914
WASHINGTON, D.C.
ISSUE 3,908

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THE NEW REPUBLIC, Vol. 201, Number 24, Issue 3,908, December 11, 1989. (Printed in the U.S. on November 21, 1989.) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated Jan. 9 & 16, July 17 & 24, Aug. 7 & 14, and Sept. 18 & 25, 1989) at 1220 19th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036. Telephone (202) 331-7494. Leadership Network advertising (212) 684-5500. Yearly subscriptions, $59.97; foreign, $89.97; Canada, $74.97. Back issues, $3.50 (includes postage & handling). ©1989 by The New Republic, Inc. (ISSN 0028-6583). Second-class postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. Available on microfilm from University Microfilms Intnl., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106 and Bell & Howell, Old Mansfield Road, Wooster, OH 44691. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Subscribers: Please send all remittances, changes of address, and subscription inquiries to Subscription Service Dept., The New Republic, P.O. Box 56515, Boulder, CO 80322. For subscription problems call 800-274-6686.

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FROM WASHINGTON

Crazy but harmless

Unlike James Fallows, I have never lived in Japan, or even visited there. So I cannot challenge his descriptions of Japanese economic life as being fundamentally different from our own. Fallows, a friend of mine, has become America's leading proponent of the view that because the Japanese are so completely different from us, normal economic thinking—in particular, the principles of free trade—cannot be applied to our relationship with them. He promotes this argument in an influential two-part article that concludes in the December *Atlantic*. It's an argument many Americans are eager to believe. If anyone can disinscrute the Japanese, it's Jim Fallows. But nothing about his explanation of Japanese society undermines the case for America to follow a policy of open trade.

The basic story is familiar. Japan is a society geared to production, not consumption. The government ruthlessly subsidizes and promotes industry after industry for export, and just as ruthlessly suppresses domestic consumption through antiquated distribution channels and artificial price structures. Japanese citizens are indoctrinated to work feverishly and endlessly, to save zealously, and to expect little of the good life in return. And import restraints are deeply imbedded in the culture—too deeply to be removed through trade negotiations. As a consequence, Japan's trade surplus with the United States survived the plunge in the dollar since 1985 and will survive anything else we throw at it—certainly including anything like "free trade."

Fallows emphatically doubts the widespread view that the trade balance will rectify itself as the Japanese adjust to and start spending their newfound wealth. If we don't act, it will go on forever. Therefore, Japan must be "contained" (an implicit analogy to the cold war against the Soviet Union). But the present approach of haranguing the Japanese about the way they operate is demeaning and futile. They are who they are. Instead, there should be firm unilateral American action to reduce the trade imbalance. Fallows offers a menu, including a 20 or 25 percent across-the-board tariff on Japanese goods.

Fallows sometimes gives the impression he thinks that Japan's very prosperity, and the hard work and saving that produced it, are themselves unfair trade practices. He attacks "Japan's uncontrolled, unbalanced economic growth." He regrets the failure of efforts to get Japanese workers to work less and spend more. But it is surely not a dirty trick to work harder than the next guy. And slower Japanese growth by itself would be no favor to the rest of the world. The question is whether Japan is using beggar-thy-neighbor methods to achieve that growth.

Fallows is also ambiguous about whether he believes that Japan's more particular protectionist practices are good or bad for the Japanese economy. The "classical free market theory" he derides holds that protectionism is self-defeating: it hurts consumers more than it helps producers. Sometimes Fallows seems to be saying that the Japanese have disproved this thesis. If so, he doesn't say how. In fact, he emphasizes how little the Japanese are to be envied their curiously distorted economic success, which leads to little improvement in their lifestyle. More often, Fallows seems to be saying that the case against protectionism is irrelevant to them: they don't mind consuming less as long as they can produce more.

But it is not irrelevant to us. To the Western mind, the purpose of production is, ultimately, consumption. And rightly so. Although we certainly are consuming too much and producing too little for our own long-term good, the goal of any sane economic policy is maximizing consumption in that long term. If Japan is behaving insanely, by our standards, is it sane to follow suit?

The basic case for free trade is the same as that for free markets generally: specialization and the division of labor make both sides of every trade better off. You don't bake your own bread. Why should Switzerland build its own cars? That basic case does not depend on reciprocity. Openness to imports is not a favor you do the rest of the world in the hope it will do the same for you; it is beneficial on its own. The famous analogy: if a trading partner decides to block its only harbor with rocks, you don't benefit by doing the same to yours.

But what if one side sells and sells and sells but never buys? That would be insane, of course. The purpose of production is consumption. But we are assuming that the Japanese are, by our standards, insane and will stay insane indefinitely. One answer is that if they are determined to produce more than they consume indefinitely, we can consume more than we produce indefinitely, which would be pleasant. Eventually, though, the dollars they accumulate but don't spend will allow them to buy up all our assets—our land, our corporations, our film libraries—and then they will own us. That is the nightmare scenario semi-unspoken by Fallows but oft-spoken elsewhere.

So they own us. Then what? They'll impoverish us? There's nothing in it for them to make us poor (just as there's nothing in it for us to make them less rich). Who would buy their Hondas and VCRs in that case? If Fallows is right about Japanese behavior, there is no reason to think that at some point they'll suddenly turn into voracious, exploitative consumers. If Fallows is wrong, there is no reason to think that change won't happen soon and gradually, thus solving the trade problem by itself.

It is harder to answer the fear that at some point foreign investors gain control, or at least unseemly influence, over your politics and culture. But there's an old saying: if you owe the bank $1,000, the bank controls you; if you owe the bank a billion dollars, you control the bank. They can't take Rockefeller Center back to Tokyo. On the other hand, we could always expropriate it from them, if it came to that.

Nevertheless, Fallows and the others are right that selling off the country to foreigners is a bad idea. Where they're wrong is in supposing that protectionism is a better one. Free trade theory holds that you cannot improve your condition by refusing to buy products from abroad that are better or cheaper than what you can make yourself. This is a matter of math and has nothing to do with the national character of your trading partners. What may impoverish us—as Fallows occasionally acknowledges—is our own failure to save and invest, not Japan's insistence on selling us products we wish to buy at prices we wish to pay. If, for example, the federal deficit were smaller, the trade deficit would be smaller too, and dark ruminations about the Japanese psyche would be of little interest. Dwelling on Japanese trade practices is a dangerous distraction.

Fallows is also right that we should let Japan be Japan. Stop haggling with them over habits they seem committed to. Some of these—hard work, saving—are unambiguously good for them and the world. Some—protectionism—are bad for them and the world. But almost none are "unfair" in the sense that they give Japan some one-sided advantage to our detriment. Where he's wrong is in urging us to adopt their worst habits as well as their best ones.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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GUARDIANS OF THE ARSENAL

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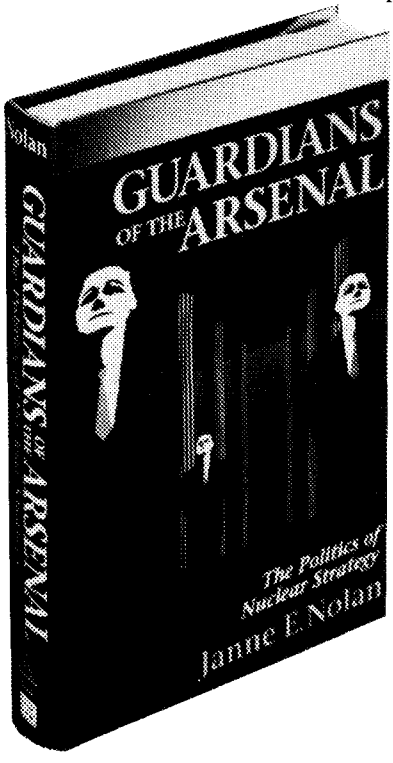

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CORRESPONDENCE

Lessons of Krasnoyarsk

To the editors:

Like other supporters of arms control, I welcomed the recent Soviet confession that the Krasnoyarsk radar violates the ABM Treaty. I was less pleased to see TNR, in "The End of Discussion," the Notebook, and the Paris Diarist (November 20), adopt the "spin" that this development should embarrass those who tried to defend arms control against Reagan Administration efforts to scuttle existing agreements. TNR suggests that pro-arms controllers bent over backward to excuse the Krasnoyarsk violation. The opposite is true. No alleged violation in the history of arms control has been so widely accepted as valid.

A separate issue was the radar's strategic significance, i.e., whether it constituted a "material breach" of the ABM Treaty such that supreme U.S. interests required immediate withdrawal. Star Wars enthusiasts, zealous to destroy the ABM Treaty, used Krasnoyarsk to conjure the existence of a Soviet master plan to erect a nationwide ABM system. Others of us argued that far from being the linchpin for such a system, Krasnoyarsk by itself could serve as little more than an early-warning radar (a function not contrary to U.S. interests)—but that the United States should demand dismantlement because a clear treaty violation was unacceptable if arms control was to proceed on a sound basis.

Two lessons derive from the Krasnoyarsk saga. First, where the United States achieved consensus about a violation, the Soviets backed down—a far better result than the ABM Treaty's abrogation. Second, the Soviet ABM master plan is a myth.

If, on the U.S. side, any apologies are due, let them come from Reagan officials who used highly dubious allegations as an excuse to break out of the limits of SALT II, and who tried to wreck the ABM Treaty through the Orwellian fraud of "reinterpretation."

JOSEPH R. BIDEN
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C.

The price of abolition

To the editors:

James M. McPherson, in his review of *Without Consent or Contract*, calls Robert William Fogel's assertion of the relative efficiency of slave vs. free agricultural labor "sensational," then "widely discredited," and finally "almost banal" ("Their Masters' Voice," October 23). Historiographically speaking, the efficiency of slavery not only remains a widely accepted view for the South but has been broadly affirmed by historians of Atlantic slavery in general. The banality of abolition when conceived as the ending of an inefficient system has been replaced by the more exciting paradox of abolition as the destruction of an efficient and viable system. For more than a decade this paradox has fueled scholarly interest in the fall of modern slavery and its moral implications.

McPherson might further the discussion if he makes it clear why he thinks the efficiency of slavery view is virtually discredited on the one hand or almost commonplace on the other. It can hardly be both.

SEYMOUR DRESCHER
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Subjective to further notice

To the editors:

The personal attacks in what purports to be a review of my book are not worth a response. But one major incomprehension deserves reply ("Bork Chop" by Mickey Kaus, November 6). There is no contradiction between my statement that a Court that employs its own notions of reasonableness to decide which classifications should be treated like race cannot avoid legislating and my further statement that all legislative classifications can be examined for their reasonableness. The former refers to the Court's practice of deciding subjectively which groups—aliens, illegitimate children, etc.—should be treated like racial groups and which not. The second refers to Justice Stevens's approach, which can be applied objectively and is supported by the inclusive language of the equal protection clause.

The core of the equal protection clause was protection of newly freed slaves so that racial classifications will almost never be reasonable. As for other classifications, the test certainly need not lead to Warren Court subjectivity. Distinctions based upon moral perceptions would not be scrutinized for rationality, as the book explicitly states. Since legislatures do not commonly enact laws that are not reasonably related to some purpose, the main effect of a reasonableness test elsewhere would be to force articulation of real purposes rather than cosmetic ones, which will often not be rationally related to the classification. That would both improve the openness of the political process and allow judgment on the constitutionality of the real end sought.

ROBERT H. BORK
Washington, D.C.

Mickey Kaus replies:

Judge Bork's old position was that the equal protection clause only outlaws discrimination based on race or ethnicity. Broader interpretations, he said, would require courts to make subjective judgments. But at his confirmation hearings he unveiled a new position: the clause would strike down any law that classified people—by race, sex, legitimacy of birth, or whatever—if it was not "reasonable." He struggles to reconcile these two positions. It can't be done.

Take a hypothetical law saying: "Women shall not be allowed to drive." Like all laws, this one creates classifications—here, by sex. Is it constitutional? The current Supreme Court would undoubtedly say no. The Bork we saw at the hearings would seemingly also say no, after applying Justice Stevens's "reasonableness" test. The problem for Bork is that this approach is just as subjective as the Warren Court precedents he reviles. That's why he hints in his letter that he wouldn't use Stevens's test after all, but rather an idiosyncratic "objective" measure of "reasonableness." Apparently that means blanket approval of all classifications that are based on "moral perceptions," and approval of any other classification if it is "reasonably related" to a purpose the legislature announces.

But this "objective" test has an even bigger problem: it will hardly invalidate any laws at all. What law isn't based on "moral perceptions"? Even our no-women-drivers law might be based on a "moral perception" that women belong at home. Bork would have to OK it. If the "moral" loophole didn't apply, the law would easily pass Bork's "reasonably related" requirement, because every law is "reasonably related" to at least one purpose—in this case, keeping women off the road. Bork admits in his letter that his requirement will have bite only if legislators announce a "cosmetic" purpose (say, promoting highway safety) that conflicts with the law's actual effect (e.g., if statistics show women drivers are safer). His test wouldn't block a legislature that frankly declares "we don't like women drivers," or that simply says nothing as it enacts the ban!

The flip side

To the editors:

The October 23 Notebook item about

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

DECEMBER 11, 1989

THE EL SALVADOR HORROR

Amid the horrific savagery in El Salvador—the assassinations committed by right-wing death squads associated with the military and the urban terrorism committed by the left-wing death squads of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front—the country's attorney general called upon Pope John Paul II to remove the Roman Catholic Church's bishops because the government could not guarantee their safety. This was a shameful confession of loss of control over right-wing terrorists, and President Alfredo Cristiani immediately rejected it. But what Cristiani should have done—and still ought to do—is to invite the pope into El Salvador to mediate an end to the civil war that has claimed tens of thousands of lives over the past decade.

Prestigious outside mediation has worked elsewhere in Central America. The president of Costa Rica, Oscar Arias, has set Nicaragua on the road to peace through democracy. His Nobel Peace Prize will truly be deserved if Nicaragua holds a free and fair election next February. El Salvador is a harder case. The FMLN is more Stalinist and brutal than the Sandinistas, the Salvadoran right more fascist and fanatic than the *contras*. El Salvador will need a more powerful mediator than Arias. The pope has experience in Latin American diplomacy. He successfully prevented war between Chile and Argentina over the Beagle Channel, and he has the moral authority to force the sides into talks.

If any country ever needed a "silver bridge" (as Latins designate an illustrious mediator), it is El Salvador. It seems impossible for either side, the government or the left, to win a military victory. Each side claims that it is interested in negotiations, and talks actually had just recessed when the FMLN launched its murderous November offensive. Even though the evidence suggests the FMLN was not negotiating in good faith (such a massive offensive took months to prepare), its leaders claim they reignited combat simply to get the government to negotiate seriously. Now that their offensive has been blunted, perhaps they, and the government, will negotiate seriously.

The atmosphere for negotiating, though, surely has been poisoned by the brutality of warfare over the past two weeks, which started with an FMLN attempt to assassinate its negotiating partners, the top civilian and military leaders of the country. A thousand people were killed as rebels took refuge in civilian houses, which the military invaded, strafed, and bombed. And then six Jesuit priests were butchered—almost certainly, Bush Administration officials say, by right-wing elements of the Salvadoran military. These priests formed a nexus of moderate-left sentiment in the country, one sorely needed for reconciliation of the nation. The FMLN offensive almost surely was designed, in part, to raise questions about whether the Cristiani government controls the country and the army. In this respect, if in no other, it succeeded. All this makes high-level mediation even more important.

The pope would seem an apt mediator for El Salvador. The country is overwhelmingly Catholic, the Church itself has been martyred by the war (the murders of the six Jesuits follow those of four churchwomen, many priests, and Archbishop Oscar Romero), and the pope could provide a restraining influence on clergy tempted by tenets of liberation theology to involve themselves in the FMLN's bloody revolution. The far right in El Salvador has shown contempt for all Church authority so far, apparently believing that priests are in league with the Communists. Pope John Paul, however, has unquestionable anti-Communist credentials. He also has the spiritual authority to make such right-wingers as still believe in God fear for their immortal souls. The FMLN would not respect his spiritual authority, but could not defy his political power. The pope does not have to sit in San Salvador and haggle among the parties about details. He can, however, launch negotiations, supervise them, and intervene directly at points of impasse.

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We think that the outlines of a fair settlement in El Salvador are fairly clear, and we'd hope that the pope would also. There should be a cease-fire in place (rather than surrender by the rebels, as the government has been demanding, or immediate reorganization and reduction of the military, as the FMLN has been demanding); an amnesty for rebels willing to turn in their arms; the arrest of those responsible for the killings of the Jesuits; a credible plan for purging the military and police of murderers and torturers; and internationally supervised elections in which the safety of left-wing candidates and campaigners, before the voting and after, is guaranteed. We do not believe that the FMLN deserves seats in the Cabinet because its 7,000 guerrillas have been able to wreak havoc throughout the country. What it does deserve is a fair chance to win the power to which its political support entitles it.

The evidence suggests that the FMLN's true popular support is in fact very limited, and that this is precisely why it has resorted to warfare, provocation, and terrorism, including the use of car bombs and the murder within the past two years of nine civilian mayors, the country's former attorney general, and various close relatives of top military commanders. In national elections this March, candidates of the Democratic Convergence, loosely associated with the FMLN, got just 3.8 percent of the vote, and those candidates themselves estimated that the FMLN has just 50,000 adherents in the country, about one percent of the population. To the dismay of Convergence candidates, the FMLN boycotted the election, claiming it was not fairly represented. It threatened with death anyone who voted, and sought to bring transportation to a standstill by mining roads and machine-gunning trucks, cars, and buses. Nonetheless, 54 percent of the eligible population voted. Fifty-four percent of those voting supported Cristiani's ARENA party, to 36 percent for the former ruling party, the Christian Democrats.

We suspect that if the pope arranged another election with ironclad safety guarantees for the left, the FMLN would find a way not to participate. If that were to occur, the pope then would have shone a light on the Communists' true nature and intentions, and there would be no question inside or outside El Salvador about who is democratic and who is not.

Papal intervention may take time to arrange, or may never happen. In the absence of a *pontifex ex machina*, the United States needs to decide whether and how to continue supporting the government of El Salvador. A bipartisan consensus has developed—wisely, we think—around the idea that the Cristiani government deserves a chance to show that it can assert control over its military and the right wing by bringing to justice those who perpetrated the murder of the six Jesuits, their housekeeper and her daughter.

Cristiani has demonstrated his good faith in the past, and in fact was lauded by one of the murdered Jesuits, Father Ignacio Ellacuria, the rector of Central American University, who also urged the FMLN to abandon the strategy of insurrection. (See "Grave Thoughts" by Michael Massing, page 12.) Until this year, no military officer ever had been jailed for killing a civilian. Cristiani, however, saw to it that several officers and soldiers were arrested and indicted for the massacre of ten civilians this February in the village of San Sebastian. (They have yet to be convicted.) Cristiani also rescinded the release of military officers involved in a right-wing kidnapping plot.

Even so, Congress will not continue to aid the government unless it can find and punish the Jesuits' killers and acts in other ways to control rightists in and out of the security forces. Cristiani needs, especially, to fulfill his promises to reform the Salvadoran judicial system so that judges are decently paid, operate independently of political influence, and are protected from intimidation.

Finally, El Salvador should be an urgent subject for discussion at the Bush-Gorbachev summit. The FMLN is not directly subject to Soviet discipline, but its top command operates out of Managua and its arms come, at least in part, from Cuba and Nicaragua, which are economically dependent on the Soviet Union. Bush has every right to expect that Gorbachev, if he means what he says about wanting a more peaceful world, will do what he can to pressure Fidel Castro and Daniel Ortega to get the FMLN to stop fighting and negotiate in good faith. The United States, for its part, needs to exert similar pressure on a Salvadoran government it has been aiding at a rate of well over a million dollars a day.

It remains an open question why the FMLN launched its massive and bloody offensive at this time. The Administration asserts it was an act of desperation, based on the Cristiani government's popularity and success, the wilting of communism's appeal all over the world, and fear that Soviet aid to its benefactors was about to decline. The FMLN did throw its best fighters and front group cadres into the battle, yet utterly failed to ignite a popular insurrection, and seems to have lost militarily.

Some say that the FMLN acted—as the Viet Cong did in Tet 1968—to demonstrate that the government and the military were really weaker than they appeared, to undermine American support for the government. It may also have hoped to provoke right-wing repression that, in turn, would lead to popular discontent, a U.S. aid cutoff, and, ultimately, a Communist victory. Even though the FMLN seems to have been beaten badly in combat, it's not at all clear that its long-run strategy has been defeated. That depends on Cristiani cleansing his regime of fascist killers (who are, in effect, allies of the FMLN) and establishing a basis for social and economic justice and political reconciliation.

If he does not, if the right runs amok, the rebels may yet succeed—and the United States may run out of options. Cristiani needs help, but that help cannot be limited to aid alone. It has to include some prodding, even an occasional well-timed and credible threat. Given the American people's unquestioned (and wise) disinclination to see U.S. troops involved in the Salvador-

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an war—a disinclination strengthened by the changes sweeping the Communist world, which have reduced the geopolitical if not the moral importance of the outcome in El Salvador—the instruments available to U.S. policy-makers are of questionable effectiveness. But as long as any instruments at all remain to be used, the United States has a moral duty to use them to ease El Salvador's terrible agony and steer it toward peace and reconciliation.

NOTEBOOK

ABORTION BACKPEDAL WATCH: On the heels of electoral defeats in Virginia and New Jersey, Lee Atwater told Republican Governors conferring in Hilton Head, South Carolina, that they should search their hearts to find what they believe on abortion. Atwater is now saying the party is a large tent that can accommodate a range of views on the issue. Perhaps he has forgotten what the GOP platform has to say: "The unborn child has a fundamental individual right to life which cannot be infringed. We therefore reaffirm our support for a human life amendment to the Constitution, and we endorse legislation to make clear that the 14th Amendment's protections apply to unborn children. . . . And we reaffirm our support for the appointment of judges at all levels of the judiciary who respect traditional family values and the sanctity of innocent human life." Perhaps the party's interim position is that judicial nominees have to pass a litmus test on abortion but candidates don't. Or maybe it has no position, just a lot of positioning. Lee, please clarify soonest.

RUSSIAN WATCH WATCH: *GQ* is currently running a series of advertisements for Paketa Soviet-made watches, now available at trendy stores like Charivari and Bloomingdale's in New York for $100 and up. "We have resisted the era of quartz technology because we believe in a personal relationship with time," the ads explain in Russian and English. Talk about making a virtue of adversity: the company has resisted modern quartz technology because it doesn't have quartz technology. Those who have brought the manually winding watches back from the U.S.S.R. (where they fetch less than ten dollars at black market rates) do confirm, however, that many of the timepieces do develop a very personal—almost random—relationship with time.

HONORARIABLE MENTIONS: Sometimes it's a good idea to pay blackmail. In the case of the House and Senate pay raise, the public is getting a pretty good deal: Congress has released the executive and judicial branch employees whose salaries it was holding hostage, and the House, at least, has agreed to drop the inherently corrupt practice of accepting speaking fees from parties with an interest in legislation. All this in exchange for a raise to $125,000 by 1991. But as long as we're shelling out, we should be demanding better terms. First and foremost, the Senate has yet to go along with the ban on honoraria. Second, the House left a loophole that says members can donate speaking fees to their favorite charities. For Representative Dan Rostenkowski, this means several hundred thousand dollars in goodwill payments to supporters and contributors—such as his parish church and a Polish baseball team on Chicago's Northwest side. The beneficiaries of these good works don't even have to be publicly disclosed, according to House rules, just listed as "charity." And another loophole: spouses are still allowed to accept speaking fees, which is just as dubious as members taking payments from lobbyists themselves. These details might seem minor in the context of a basically reasonable compromise, but if past experience is a guide, any trickle of slush that Congress doesn't dam up will soon become a river.

SIMPLE GIFTS: Speaking of weak selling points, how about Dan Quayle's comment at a National Defense University symposium on September 17: "Sometimes you need a degree of simplicity to cut through the fog that enters into the debate." By this standard, the Vice President is a regular lighthouse. •

POSTCARD PARIS

GLOBAL REACH

By Martin Peretz

Paris is a good place for an American newspaper addict. You get the European press, in profusion; and you still get the American papers as well, in the form of the *International Herald Tribune* and the occasional packet from home. The British and French papers, unsurprisingly, are more alert to what is happening in Eastern and Central Europe than the American media are. Whatever the subject, though, the press on this side of the Atlantic has a greater capacity for sobriety and seriousness, and a greater aversion to breathlessness, than we are accustomed to at home. In the United Stated we seem to feel cheated if we are not told at least once each week that everything we believed for decades is hopelessly out of date. Not that the European media are without their quota of garbage: the European gutter papers, especially the small-minded, big-breasted British tabloids, make their American

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equivalents look sedate indeed. Still, European papers on average are more informative in reporting and more exacting in analysis than the average American paper—or even the average better-than-average American paper.

An example of the latter is the *Boston Globe*, which I continue to see even at this remove: out of mischief, perhaps, a friend adds an occasional copy to the care packages she sends from home. The *Globe*, after all, is the paper I've been reading daily for 35 years. It purports to represent the best in American journalism—so it has been representing itself for decades, with far less reason than the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* or the *Louisville Courier-Journal*. The *Globe*'s Sunday book review section, for example, is a few paltry pages hidden behind travel and lifestyle fluff—this in America's most bookish city. But the *Globe* always dresses with a rose in its buttonhole, usually a rotting rose: look at the hauteur with which it carries itself against the working-class *Herald*.

There is something stiflingly pure of heart about the *Globe*. One reason is Mary McGrory, whose burden is lighter now than it was half a generation ago. In those days her Church didn't make it comfortable for ladies and gentlemen who blamed the world's evils on the Americans. The Maryknoll sisters and fathers, for example, saw history a little differently from how they see it now. They believed that Communists committed atrocities, and that it was only through the Communists that Americans learned about atrocity. They knew what was happening in China: they had priests and nuns in that country, a place that folks like me hypothesized might be a wee bit harsh only because its leaders were experimenting with organic agriculture. The Maryknolls' change is probably why Tip O'Neill used to see the world one way and then, mirabile dictu, suddenly saw it another way. Mary, of course, was always on the edge of heresy; but now the Father's House has many mansions, many more than we old pluralists could imagine, and certainly some of these give official sanction to what had previously been forbidden. Mary is now free to think anything she cares to.

The same-day paper here, of course, is the *International Herald Tribune*—an evocation, if you're old enough to remember as far back as 1966, of the old *New York Herald Tribune*. It's also a reminder of the two still great dailies of home, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. The *Post*, or rather the better side of the *Post*, is evoked by its best columnists: Michael Kinsley's TRB right from TNR, Charles Krauthammer, and George Will. You also get the best of the *Times*, through A. M. Rosenthal and William Safire; and the worst, through Anthony Lewis. (For some afflictions there is apparently no relief, like an elusive allergy.)

The *Paris Trib* is edited for a more than usually busy reader. This is perhaps what drives its seriousness, even when it's devoting space to Souren Melkian's masterful coverage of the art market, which can't interest more than a small percentage of the paper's circulation. Crammed and cramped though the *Trib* is, however, it still can't emancipate itself from the sort of heavy thinkers paid for their portentous ruminations by the *New Yorker* or other keepers of gasbag orthodoxy. So Rosenthal or Krauthammer can't truly save you from the current cliché; they're overwhelmed here by what overwhelms them at home. It's the cliché that certifies their competitors to the certifiers, and certifies the certifiers to themselves.

The world is changing in ways none of us ever anticipated. What, then, are we to make of those, in the *Washington Post* and elsewhere, who are still arguing that the United States should put itself out on a limb for the deal cut in Taif, Saudi Arabia, by barely half of the Lebanese legislators elected in 1972? The deal solves nothing. It leaves the Syrians in place—or rather in many places, which corresponds to no conceivable American interest. It also leaves the Israelis in place along a thin sliver of land north of Israel proper. No one believes that the few hundred Israelis would insist on staying if the 40,000 Syrian troops went home. The trouble is, the Syrians think Lebanon is their home. They think Cyprus is, too—and parts of Turkey and Iraq, and all of Israel, and the rest of ancient Palestine. Allowing Assad's forces to remain is no small concession, although that's how it's painted by those who make a habit of apologizing for Arab extremism. Now, the residue of the Lebanese legislature—elected 17 years ago (!) and subsidized today by the Saudi monarch—has managed to elect a Christian president. This is not the achievement it's made out to be, either. Christian presidents obedient to Damascus have served before; Christian leaders controlled by Damascus sabotaged the delicate social contract behind what was once Lebanon's facsimile of a civil society. The Franjieh clan of Maronites made its fortune in the sanguinary service of Syria. The new president, Rene Moawad, is cut from their cloth. The big lie is that his elevation pacifies the Muslims. Well, it does pacify some of them, the urban Sunni elites in particular. It gives them hope that the prosperous old order of a customs payoff at every militia checkpoint might be resuscitated so that a few more deposits can be made into foreign bank accounts. But Moawad's election simply adds to the offense felt by the Shiites, long disdained and long disfranchised. It is their rage that must be addressed. And maybe it can't. This, though, is not a solution; it is a charade.

Another charade: the blithe attention given by the media to the first anniversary of Palestinian independence. What independence? Don't you remember? The one declared by the PLO just about a year ago this week. Well, if the Palestinians are any closer to actual independence in the West Bank and Gaza than they were a year ago, or ten, then I am an astronaut. If the Palestinians were realistic, in fact, they'd be nostalgic for the Camp David Accords of 1978—because those alone are the documents on which any future accord can be based.

Jim Hoagland (in the *Trib* via the *Post*) is disappointed that Salah Khalaf, who goes by the nom de guerre Abu

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Iyad and is Yasir Arafat's second in command, won't adequately apologize to him for Fatah's 1973 terrorist murder of his friend Curt Moore, an American Embassy staffer in the Sudan. After all, "Khalaf has a gravity and a concern for credibility that Yasir Arafat lacks." Khalaf's unwillingness or inability to say the right words about Moore to Hoagland, after having said so many other right words to so many other right people, just about breaks Hoagland's heart. Imagine Khalaf "repeating to my astonishment what the PLO said 16 years ago," writes Hoagland. Imagine. But why should the PLO bother to please Hoagland when it has, even without Khalaf's gravity or credibility, pleased George Shultz and James Baker? It is only the narcissism of an American reporter that persuades Hoagland that he, too, is somehow a party to the conflict, someone to be conciliated, a factor. Hoagland is obsessed by what happened one day in Khartoum more than a decade and a half ago. The Israelis know that Fatah is still engaged in terrorism against them, and Washington knows it, too. And although in the year since the PLO declared Palestinian independence those Arabs living in the territories have only experienced the Israeli boot more firmly on their neck, there has been one sign of what Palestinian independence would be like, one auguring, one premonition. This is in the extent of Palestinian terror against Palestinians. This is something in which Palestinian political culture specializes. And it won't stop, independence or no independence, even if Salah Khalaf, alias Abu Iyad, apologizes ever so contritely to Jim Hoagland for the murder of his friend, Curt Moore, in the Sudan 17 years ago. •

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

THE MOMENT-MAKER

By Fred Barnes

On July 2 the Memphis *Commercial-Appeal* began touting one of President Bush's favorite themes, "1,000 points of light." For nearly five months, it profiled community volunteers by the hundreds. With the 1,000th profile coming up on November 22, the editors asked the White House if Bush would write a thank-you note to the folks the paper had identified. It would run on page one, culminating the drive to encourage volunteerism.

The request caught the eye of Sig Rogich, a Las Vegas advertising man who arrived at the White House last October. Rogich thought the paper's campaign "exemplified community spirit," and he knew a chance to personalize a Bush theme when he saw one. So instead of the letter, Rogich proposed that the President fly to Memphis and address all 1,000 points of light. Naturally, the editors said yes. And Bush showed up in Memphis on November 22. The whole thing, says a White House official, was "classic Rogich."

Rogich, 45, has the starchy title of Assistant to the President for Activities and Initiatives. The title is misleading. He's the official in charge of burnishing Bush's image. Or, to put it pejoratively, he's the new Mike Deaver. For more than a decade, Deaver stage-crafted events to put Ronald Reagan in the best possible light. Now that's what Rogich does for Bush. But Bush does not have Reagan's skill as a performer. Rogich's predecessor on the Bush staff, Stephen Studdert, failed. He was criticized for scheduling appearances that neither drove home Bush's themes nor underscored his personal strengths. When Studdert resigned, Bush's first comment was, "Let's see if we can get Sig."

The fondest dream of image-builders like Rogich is to create "moments." These are fleeting episodes or epiphanies or symbolic events. With Bush, the idea is to encapsulate something about him or his Presidency in a riveting, visible, and unforgettable way. Imagine, for example, Bush at the Berlin Wall, embracing Mikhail Gorbachev and symbolically pushing aside the Iron Curtain. (This has crossed the minds of White House aides.) That would be memorable, right? Bush doesn't need moments to increase his popularity; it's sky-high. But his support isn't intense or deep. Moments can change that, assuming they play up something favorable. Although Bush is never going to be a larger-than-life figure like Reagan, a moment or two might make him seem less prosaic. Or produce an emotional bond between him and the public. That's the theory anyway.

Reagan's terms brimmed with moments. One was spontaneous and not shown on TV: his quips after he was shot in 1981. Reagan aide Lyn Nofziger repeated the lines to the press, and the legend of Reagan's bravery under fire was born. Deaver's masterpiece was Reagan's speech on the 40th anniversary of D-day in June 1984. It was staged on a cliff above the beaches of Normandy, and Reagan delivered an emotional, patriotic talk. It was so powerful that Rogich, as a member of Reagan's media team in the 1984 Presidential campaign, used a clip from it in a campaign commercial. In 1986 Reagan gave another heart-tugging performance when he met with families of the astronauts killed in the Challenger explosion. I could go on.

With Bush, who's been in public life for more than 23 years, it's hard to recall any real moments. Sure, there are instances of courage and selflessness in his World War II record, but that's ancient history. I asked a senior White House official if he could think of any Bush moments. The best he could come up with was the role Bush played in reviving the Republican Party after

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Watergate. But that wasn't a moment; it lasted almost a decade. There was one Bush moment, though: the live interview by CBS anchorman Dan Rather in 1987. Roger Ailes, Bush's media adviser in the presidential race and Rogich's colleague, gave Bush a counterpunch line about Rather's having stalked off the set of a newscast. Bush used it, looked tough, and the encounter was memorable.

Rogich doesn't have Ailes's zest for combat, but he contributed to Bush's attacks on Michael Dukakis in 1988. He directed the filming of Boston Harbor for the ad zinging Dukakis's environmental record. He devised a TV spot that showed gas lines and other ills of Jimmy Carter's Presidency. It was accompanied by the tune "I Remember When," sung with new lyrics by a former member of Little Anthony and the Imperials. Rogich produced and got the ad on the air in five days, just after the Democratic National Convention.

His specialty is softer stuff. As boss of the biggest ad agency in Las Vegas, he knows lots of stars (Wayne Newton, Frank Sinatra, etc.). For the 1984 Republican National Convention, he signed up Lee Greenwood to sing "Proud to Be an American," then used the song in a commercial. For the closing segment of the convention, Rogich recruited Ray Charles (for $25,000) to sing "God Bless America." In the fall Rogich staged a moment in an ad countering Reagan's warmonger image. While working alone in the Roosevelt Room, Rogich noticed battle streamers on an American flag, one for every major military engagement in American history. Then he glanced across the hall at Reagan in the Oval Office. From this emerged an effective commercial in which Reagan talked about the flag and said he hoped "we never have to add one more streamer."

Bush took an instant liking to Rogich when they met in 1984. He personally hired Rogich for the 1988 campaign as advertising director. Bush and a Nevada millionaire might seem an improbable match, but Rogich is soft-spoken, kindly, and relaxed. "For a Las Vegas guy, he's kind of an innocent abroad," says Press Secretary Marlin Fitzwater. "The value of Sig is he's got ideas. If one doesn't fly, he comes up with another one." He's also willing to weather flak. Rogich drew objections—from Fitzwater and budget director Richard Darman, among others—when he proposed a series of Bush radio appearances called "Any Saturday." Bush could choose the Saturdays, perhaps ten a year, when he wanted to be interviewed. There was one problem: he's got to talk about what's on reporters' minds, not his. Even so, Bush liked the idea, and the first interview was broadcast on November 18.

In showcasing Bush in 1988, Ailes sought to make him appear tough. Rogich stresses Bush's kinder, gentler side. Two days before Bush went to Memphis, he visited an elementary school in Chicago. Students there had written anti-drug letters to the White House, prompting the drop-by. Bush was in Chicago to speak at a fund-raiser, so why not take advantage? It might not have bolstered Bush's drug program significantly, but at least it made him look good.

Rogich is also supposed to make sure Bush's themes come through clearly. He works on plans for trips so Bush can put his best face forward. When the December summit was announced, Rogich flew to Malta to check the lay of the land (and water). He inspected the American destroyer on which two Bush-Gorby sessions will be held and flew to Sebastopol to check out the Soviet ship. One of his concerns was getting the press close to Bush. Most reporters will be stuck miles away on Malta, but Rogich has arranged for more than 100 reporters and TV technicians to come aboard the American ship during the talks.

The first major Rogich production was the President's trip to San Francisco after the earthquake on October 20. Rogich believes Bush does better when he appears on the scene than in giving a speech. Bush did fine, though he was tieless and looked like a guy on a boating weekend. The featured event was Bush's tour of a collapsed section of I-880 in Oakland. The networks carried it live. TV cameras were set up so Bush could chat with reporters with the highway as a backdrop. But Bush wound up on the wrong side of the road. Rogich had arranged for Bush to meet Dr. James Betts, the surgeon who amputated a six-year-old boy's leg to free him from the highway rubble. But the cameras didn't get a good shot of that either. Bush talked to the boy's father by phone. This was "the most touching moment" of the trip, Bush said, but it occurred in private. Bush didn't go to the boy's bedside. He would have had to fly in, tying up the hospital's helipad as patients were being flown in and out. Rogich said no. Some things are more important than moments. •

A conversation with Ignacio Ellacuria.

GRAVE THOUGHTS

By Michael Massing

If, somehow, the FMLN were ever to take power in El Salvador, many a town square in the country would be named after Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero, and many a main street after Father Ignacio Ellacuria. On November 16 the 59-year-old Jesuit priest and university rector became an instant martyr for the rebel cause, doing more by his death to undermine the ARENA government than a week of guerrilla attacks.

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In the days prior to the murder of Ellacuria and his five fellow priests, Salvadorans calling in to the national radio network had bitterly denounced the rector, branding him the intellectual author of the FMLN's bloody offensive. In fact, Ellacuria had consistently argued against such an attack, urging the guerrillas instead to seek a political settlement. This was one of the key points he made during a lengthy conversation I had with him in March, shortly before El Salvador's presidential election. Viewed nine months later, in the wake of his grisly death, Ellacuria's remarks seem sadly prescient, a chilling commentary on his country's—and his own—fate.

I considered myself lucky to see him. About 800 journalists were in town to cover the election, and a good many wanted to interview him. In polarized El Salvador, where political commentary is but another weapon in a wounding war, Ellacuria was renowned for his acute analytical powers—a Jesuit to the core. An advocate of liberation theology, he was well connected to the FMLN and made no attempt to hide it. For journalists, this only heightened his value as a guide to the rebel psyche.

And I needed a guide. The guerrillas' strategy was proving extremely difficult to untangle. The FMLN was presenting a face of sweet reasonableness: it had issued a string of peace proposals, expressed support for a negotiated settlement, and for the first time offered to participate in national elections. Yet at the same time the FMLN was doing its best to disrupt the election. It had declared a *paro*, or work stoppage, threatening to destroy any vehicles caught on the road. Its urban commandos, meanwhile, were carrying out hourly acts of sabotage. How to explain the contradiction?

Our talk took place two days before the election. The mood in the capital was very tense. The power was out, the water off, and the streets deserted save for bands of nervous young soldiers on patrol. In this convulsive setting, the University of Central America campus, with its trees and walkways, seemed an oasis of calm. In contrast to El Salvador's National University, which had been taken over by the left, the UCA, under Ellacuria's direction, had remained largely free of politics, retaining its reputation, despite ten years of war, as one of Central America's best universities.

Slight and serious, with dark eyebrows and sharp features, Ellacuria had an austere look about him, but when he spoke—always softly—he projected an air of great serenity. I asked him about the seeming contradictions in guerrilla strategy. "I've had a lot of discussions with them," he said, sitting straight-backed in his chair. "And it's clear that they have embarked on a new strategy." The rebel commanders, he said, had taken a fresh look at the world around them—the thaw between the superpowers, the Central American peace plan, Nicaragua's economic collapse—and concluded that

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"international circumstances will not allow a Marxist-Leninist government in this region." So the FMLN had shifted from a military to a political stance, from "an anti-election to a pro-election strategy." This was a "very profound change," he said—one that he had been advocating for four years. Now the guerrillas, prodded by changing circumstances, had themselves come around.

But there was more to it than that, Ellacuria cautioned. The guerrillas, while exploring a political solution, had not ruled out violence. "The armed path is still open," he noted. If negotiations failed, the guerrillas would go back on the offensive, seeking to spark a popular uprising. The FMLN, he added, "thinks that an insurrection is still possible."

Ellacuria did not. Citing UCA's own opinion polls—highly respected for their accuracy—he said that the FMLN's supporters were in a distinct minority. Such tactics as assassinating mayors, he said, had cost the front dearly in terms of popular support. This didn't bother the guerrillas, though. "They think the population is very radical and militant." Disagreeing, Ellacuria said that the damage caused by such cold-blooded tactics would be "difficult to repair." In this Ellacuria would prove correct: the guerrilla offensive, when it finally arrived, sparked no uprising.

There was a knock at the door. Ellacuria's secretary poked in her head to say that a Spanish TV network was on the phone from Madrid, hoping to arrange a live hookup for election night. Ellacuria excused himself. I looked at his bookshelves, which lined the walls from floor to ceiling. The volumes reflected his lifelong interest in political philosophy: Kant, Weber, Hume, Nietzsche, Marx, Foucault. On his desk was a book by Roque Dalton, the Salvadoran poet and revolutionary executed for heresy by the FMLN in 1975. On the wall was an honorary degree from Loyola University in Chicago and—befitting a native of Spain—a print of *Guernica*.

When Ellacuria returned, I asked whether he believed the guerrillas to be out of touch with reality. "They're somewhat out of touch with empirical reality, but not with profound reality," he said. He explained what he meant by listing the multitude of illnesses afflicting El Salvador—the misery, the malnutrition, the militarism, the death squads. In an example of what so inflamed the right about Ellacuria, he spoke without qualifiers about the Salvadoran army and its American backers. "The sad thing is that the United States cannot offer a democratic army. It supposes that to democratize the army is to weaken it." He explained: "A democratic army is one that respects civilian authority and human rights. Achieving this would require prosecuting officers for human rights violations, and this the army will never accept." Ellacuria noted that many of those responsible for the thousands of assassinations between 1980 and 1983 were still in power.

Then, speaking with a bluntness that one rarely encounters in El Salvador, the rector named Carlos Eugenio Vides Casanova, the minister of defense. In the early 1980s Vides had served as head of the infamous National Guard, which had perpetrated some of the most heinous crimes of that period. Now he was the country's most powerful military man. As long as such people remained in power, Ellacuria observed, the assassinations would continue.

At the end of our conversation, I asked him whether his work—especially his contacts with the guerrillas—placed him in any danger. "Yes, there are risks to us," he said, adding, however, that those working at UCA were intellectuals, not politicians, and this afforded a measure of protection. "They respect us in the work we do." In an interview otherwise filled with foresight, this, sadly, was the one point on which the *padre* turned out to be wrong.

MICHAEL MASSING is a New York writer and 1989 Alicia Patterson fellow.

The Iron Lady goes plop.

SPLATCHER

By Michael Elliott

LONDON

When British television viewers switched on their sets to watch history unfold in Berlin, they averted their eyes from a more domestic but no less compelling drama: Margaret Thatcher heading for the rocks.

In May Thatcher celebrated ten years as prime minister. More than that, she celebrated ten years in which her ideas dominated British life. Then, with startling speed, things began to unravel. In June her Conservative Party was beaten by Labour in nationwide elections to the European Parliament. In July she reshuffled her Cabinet, to get the team that she wanted in place well before the general election in 1991 or 1992, which left half her ministers with bruised egos and a thirst for revenge. In October Nigel Lawson, her chancellor of the Exchequer (chief finance minister), resigned because she would not back his judgment that Britain should join the exchange-rate mechanism that links the other European currencies to each other as quickly as possible. She listened instead to Sir Alan Walters, a part-time, unelected, adviser based in Washington at the World Bank. In two devastating interviews on the affair

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Lawson looked statesmanlike and honest; Thatcher belligerent and not quite truthful. Labour now leads the Conservatives by more than ten percent in the polls. And for most of the last month, the House of Commons has echoed with whispered plots to get rid of her.

As it happens, the plots will come to naught. Conservative politicians are a gutless lot who talk tough but hide behind the sofa when the horror movie comes on. But conventional wisdom has it that Thatcher can take little comfort in that. In three respects, her future looks bleak.

The first difficulty is the state of the British economy. On November 15 John Major, Lawson's successor as finance minister, presented the government's annual statement on economic affairs. It made for depressing listening. Growth next year is expected to be around one-and-a-quarter percent; excluding oil, GDP will grow by just three-quarters of a percent. Inflation, now seven percent, will still be nudging six percent at the end of next year. The current account deficit of £20 billion ($31 billion) this year will shrink next year, but only to £15 billion. As a proportion of GDP it will almost certainly continue to be the largest deficit in the industrialized world. It was only Major's announcement that he was injecting £5.5 billion of extra public spending into the economy that calmed the nerves of those who had predicted a full-blown recession.

MARGARET THATCHER BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Second, Thatcher has been wounded because there is no classically "Thatcherite" successor to her in the Conservative Party. In the 1970s she was able to tap a vein of blue-collar populism. She gave scarcely concealed nods to those who disliked immigration, backed the police against liberal troublemakers, and, during the Falklands War and its aftermath, reveled in a crude jingoism. None of her likely successors—fastidious fellows all—will play those cards with the same ruthlessness.

Third, she has been caught out by an enthusiasm among the British, which she does not share, for ever closer integration with the countries of the European Community. This explained her party's disastrous performance at the elections to the European Parliament, when the Conservatives ran a crudely anti-European campaign. And it lies at the heart of Lawson's departure.

Some parts of this catalog of doom are more convincing than others. On European policy, for example, it would be foolish to underestimate Thatcher's ability to speak for the voice of authentic British opinion. It may be true that most British businessmen are far keener on European integration than she is. But a recent poll in the *Independent* showed that the British as a whole were far less European in their outlook than the French, West Germans, and Spanish (if you want to know why, look at a map).

Similarly, though it may be true that none of her likely successors is singing the same populist tune she did (the police are unpopular with the middle class, and racism no longer stirs the blood), all her likely successors—like Major, the least prejudiced of men—accept the central economic elements of Thatcherism. Those elements include commitment to a progressive reduction in the burden of taxation; the introduction of markets and competition into areas (like health and education) where they have been conspicuously absent; and as small a role for the state in economic management (and as large a role for markets) as possible.

It is because economic policy has been so important to defining Thatcher's beliefs that current conditions really hurt her. The years when output was growing strongly (1986 to 1988) now seem long ago and far away. Once more a dash for growth seems to have led ineluctably to a balance-of-payments crisis that will in turn produce a run on the currency. In the longer term there are systemic weaknesses not yet put right. Britain has the least well-trained and well-educated work force in Europe—or "the least

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nice and the most thick," as one Conservative MP said to me recently.

Hence this season's fashionable topic of dinner party conversation: that ten years of Thatcherism has changed nothing, that the country is, economically, just about where it was in 1979, and that when she goes, she will be forgotten in a week.

This is entertaining, but garbage. The 1980s have been a period of profound and irreversible change in Britain. The problem is that for many of the most articulate and intelligent British, the nature of the change makes them uncomfortable. For the 30 years before Thatcher, middle-class Britons had gotten used to being told that there was something rotten about materialism, that managing the country's decline was the best that could be hoped for, that wealth was "showy." Thatcher's message was simple. She said, in effect, "I want to make you richer than your parents were, and to make your children richer than you." Only the *bien peasants* were surprised when this proved electorally compelling.

And most of us do feel richer. During the 1980s average real earnings have risen by around 16 percent, with significantly higher figures for the growing proportion of the population in white-collar occupations. We have bigger houses than our parents did, more capital in the bank, take more holidays abroad, buy better clothes, eat in better restaurants, even (will wonders never cease?) spend money to improve our teeth. My mother, who died two years ago, left Britain's shores just once and never flew. Now people are talking about how much cheaper it is to have one's second home in France than in Dorset. Anyone who can listen to that kind of talk and think Britain has not changed lives in a dreamworld.

The new wealth is not, as Thatcher's critics allege, the sole consequence of a credit boom. There has been a change in the attitude of corporate managers. For the first time they have a prime minister who believes that their role in society is crucial, not parasitic, and they have responded. Britain's productivity growth (admittedly from a low base) has been higher in the 1980s than for decades. Its managers are investing in new plants at record levels (one reason that imports are so high). In the past, when credit was squeezed to dampen inflation, businessmen sooner or later called for a devaluation of the pound to keep themselves competitive in export markets. Now, even with interest rates at 15 percent, there is little such talk. Instead, industrialists say that they must try to compete on quality and reliability as well as price—just as their German competitors would.

The gains that British industry has made are fragile. What seemed recently to be unbridled success stories, like Jaguar, the luxury carmaker, have turned out to be disappointing (Jaguar has been bought by Ford). But they are real gains nonetheless. The critical question is whether they have created a climate of expectations such that, having tasted a little bit of affluence in the 1980s, the electorate will always back policies that promise more affluence tomorrow.

The Labour Party's gamble is that it will not. It argues that Britain has become a more divided society (a proposition impossible to verify), and that poverty is more apparent (certainly true—beggars are a common sight in London). It suggests that come the next election, people will turn in revulsion from the wealth-creation of the Thatcher years and embrace another commitment to wealth redistribution.

I doubt it, for two reasons. First, because I have just made a radio documentary on Britain's most successful retailer, which involved more time spent in the suburbs, away for the metropolitan salons, than I can usually manage. The overwhelming impression I had was of a nation enjoying its wealth, with very little sense of guilt. Even when Labour leads the polls by ten percent, it still trails the Conservatives by 15 percent in southeast England, the richest and fastest-growing part of the country.

For the first time in 20 years the tone of Britain is being set not by the values of a London-based intelligentsia, but by a newly rich suburban middle class in places TNR readers have never heard of, such as Basingstoke, Chelmsford, and Knowle. Those who live there eat out more (and not just steak), demand something better on a vacation than a cheap hotel in Spain, buy satellite TV dishes, and have stopped watching soccer and started playing tennis. They probably do not share some of Thatcher's right-wing social views. But they are not going to junk the policies they associate with her in favor of a party that implies, as Labour does, that their lives are greedy and heartless.

I also doubt Labour's claim because it has not been able to offer policies that are distinctive from the milk-and-water corporatism of the 1960s and 1970s. Labour still dreams of an industrial policy, with gentlemen in Whitehall directing investment hither and yon, giving one firm a subsidy but not another. It still longs to bribe firms to locate here but not there; still thinks it can arm-twist banks into supporting this endeavor but not that one.

There are important issues here. France, West Germany, and Sweden have run such policies without stifling private enterprise. But Britain has not been able to, ever. Currently a lively academic debate—to which Labour has not contributed—is taking place about why that should be so. (Is British society uniquely fractured and individualistic? Does it lack coherence? Do people owe loyalty to class first and state second?) But so long as the memory of Labour's corporatism is of a society less affluent, less (let's be honest) enjoyable to live in, the electorate will choose the only available alternative. That is a set of policies that place at their core the market, competition, and a shrinking state. Thatcher cannot stay prime minister forever. But I very much doubt that what we now call Thatcherism will go when she does.

MICHAEL ELLIOTT is political editor of the *Economist*.

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Alan Cranston's soft money machine.

OLD SOFTIE

By Robert Kuttner

We all now agree that Charles Keating Jr., the unsavory savings and loan executive who once said he "certainly hoped" his political contributions were buying influence, vividly personifies the S&L mess. What has been generally overlooked in the Keating affair is the insidious ways in which money has come to corrupt Democratic politics. Democratic candidates are in a bind. Their quest for financial parity with Republicans undermines just about everything they presumably stand for, yet a quest for financial purity under present rules would leave them broke and, in all likelihood, unelected.

The central character in this drama is Senator Alan Cranston, who reaped nearly $1 million from Charles Keating. Cranston has long elevated interest group campaign finance to a high art. His political formula was to ingratiate himself with California liberals by going left on war-peace issues (he was briefly the nuclear freeze candidate in the 1984 Presidential field) while going center-right on economic and regulatory issues, winning affection and dollars from organized business. In 1985, contemplating a tough '86 re-election, Cranston became a passionate advocate of increased spending on targeted voter registration. Cranston and his son Kim built an extremely effective network of voter registration organizations, mixing partisan and non-partisan dollars and operatives.

Cranston did keep his Senate seat in 1986, by the narrowest of margins, and many political analysts credited his voter registration operation with making the difference. Cranston-funded operations registered some 300,000 new voters, mostly in Chicano or black neighborhoods. On election day an unusually effective get-out-the-vote drive spiked turnout in the same areas. These operations spilled over into ongoing party-building efforts. Dukakis's surprisingly strong showing in 1988 owed much to the strength of the California party, which in turn benefited from the political infrastructure built by Cranston-financed voter registration.

Cranston also grew into a kind of friendly godfather to voter registration drives nationally, channeling several million dollars to non-profit and supposedly non-partisan groups such as the Washington-based Forum Institute, which gave voter registration grants to a range of community-based groups. By all accounts, he was a genuine convert to the cause. Something like half the California money Cranston raised, according to insiders, went for voter registration efforts outside his own state.

Advocates of heightened efforts to boost the political participation of minorities thought Cranston was heaven-sent. He was willing to telephone personally those high rollers who had "maxed out" (reached the legal ceiling for donations limited by the federal campaign finance laws) and ask them to shunt money to voter registration. "Foundation executives reach for their calendar," says one campaign operative knowledgeable about the Cranston operation. "Politicians look at their watch." Unlike the traditional backers of voter registration, who dwelt in a glacial world of formal submissions and quarterly meetings, Cranston's was a politician's world: "Foundations ask for proposals. Cranston asked for a check," says this operative. In 1988, long after Senator Cranston was safely re-elected, Kim Cranston's California-based Center for Participation in Democracy registered some 360,000 black and Hispanic voters, eclipsing previous efforts.

The Cranston operation was a variation on the "soft money" gambit. Soft, which is to say non-federally regulated, donations can legally be given to most state parties, in some cases without limit. The fund-raisers of both parties, beginning in 1984, used the state party loophole to raise funds far in excess of the federal $25,000 limit, allowing the return of the six- and seven-figure donor. In the 1984 Presidential contest the Democrats actually raised more soft money than the Republicans, though the national and state Republican parties continue to outspend their Democratic counterparts by around 5- or 6-to-1.

In the world of soft money, voter registration offered donors an extra bonus. If you gave money intended for voter registration efforts to a non-profit, tax-exempt organization, it not only avoided federal campaign finance limits and curried favor with an influential Senator. It was tax deductible.

Modern voter registration efforts by ostensibly non-partisan groups began in the early 1960s, as part of the civil rights movement. From the outset, virtuous civic goals were inextricably scrambled with practical political ones, and foundations were used as conduits. As Taylor Branch recounts in his biography of Martin Luther King, the early voter registration grants by liberal foundations had a covert political purpose. They provided the channel for the Kennedy brothers to deliver on a secret deal made with King in the summer of 1961. In exchange for federal help in securing the Negro's right to vote, King would rein in his demonstrations. Direct federal voter registration of Southern Negroes was too sensitive for the new Kennedy Administration to sponsor directly. But the Kennedys used their influence to instigate grants by the Taconic, Field, and Stern foundations, among others, to newly founded local groups working with King, such as the Atlanta-based Voter Education Project. Once massive voter registration drives began, Bobby Kennedy's Justice Department would deliver protection of the enfranchised Negroes, though this proved sporadic. The deal worked, more or less, although it took two more years of violence, the

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death of John Kennedy, and the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act for the suffrage to be truly secure.

The liberal foundation community, however, had learned to like voter registration. There was nothing more fundamental to civil rights and to democracy itself than the ballot. Soon foundations began working to register more blacks in the urban North, too. The first black mayors—Hatcher in Gary, Stokes in Cleveland—owed their jobs in part to voter registration drives underwritten by the liberal foundations. In 1968, after Bobby Kennedy's death, the Ford Foundation, in a burst of sentiment, gave generous sabbatical grants, derided in some quarters as "severance pay," to the late Senator's staff. With Nixon's election, a backlash against the political meddling of foundations led to amendments to the tax code limiting foundations' ability to target voter registration dollars. Foundations would be more closely scrutinized by the IRS, and they could only back voter registration by giving money to strictly non-partisan national groups active in five or more states.

However, many foundations continued underwriting voter registration, though they backed away from targeting particular elections. The idea was to increase the political effectiveness of poor people and minorities generally. Unfortunately, the voting participation of poor people continued to erode as the political system ceased to deliver for them. In the 1980s a number of political strategists argued that the falloff in voting by minorities and the poor was depriving Democrats of a key constituency. The organized Democratic Party, for its part, gave lip service to voter registration but never put much money into it. The party was chronically short of money, and spending for voter registration was inevitably a lower priority than spending simply to mount campaigns and buy polling and advertising. "There are undoubtedly cases where donors are really interested in voter registration, as citizens," says a voter registration activist. "But when that is the case, they give money when I ask. They don't need a Senator to ask."

The advent of soft money produced a new enthusiasm for voter registration, on the part of both liberal foundations and political money brokers. Beginning in 1984 the voter registration groups found themselves drawing both on traditional foundation sources and on soft political money generated by Democratic (and a few Republican) fund-raisers. It was a combination that made some extremely nervous.

Though the post-1984 drive for enhanced registration did not arrest the long downward slide in voting, there were benefits in selected contests. It certainly helped Cranston. A non-partisan voter registration drive in Virginia targeted at blacks by a group called Project Vote registered some 22,000 new voters in 1989—four times more than Governor-elect Douglas Wilder's winning margin. But Cranston's woes will undoubtedly prompt a new look at soft money and foundation-sponsored voter registration, and will make foundation executives gun-shy.

For Common Cause, which has charged Cranston and four other Senators with deliberate violations of the federal campaign finance laws, there is nothing civic or virtuous in politicians steering donor money to voter registration drives. Keating alone gave some $850,000 to three voter registration groups "founded or controlled" by Cranston, almost half of which went to his son's Center for Participation in Democracy. The other recipients were Forum Institute and USA Votes. These two mixed foundation and politically inspired contributions, and funneled grants to a wide range of local groups. "Soft money," says Common Cause president Fred Wertheimer, "has become a process for people to raise funds for federal campaigns that is illegal in federal campaigns." In Common Cause's view, it is an irreconcilable contradiction when a partisan politician simultaneously raises money for supposedly non-partisan voter registration.

Yes, but.

The problem, in the absence of an overarching campaign finance scheme that limits not only "federal" contributions but state, local, and party ones as well, is that money is fungible. Despite the Common Cause complaint, under present law there is nothing illegal about a Senator soliciting donations for non-profit groups, however unpalatable it is when the donors turn out to be creatures like Keating. To correct this, the campaign finance laws would have to place strict limits on what money is spent by all citizens and what money is received by all politicians. This would also probably require reversing the Supreme Court's 1976 *Buckley* v. *Valeo* decision, which permitted expenditures by ostensibly independent committees on behalf of candidates. Until that day comes, politicians subject to federal campaign finance limits will go on raising money for whatever state and party uses the law permits; and such activities, if unseemly, will remain legal.

Project Vote, one of the most careful of the voter registration groups, was subjected to a full IRS audit in 1986 and 1987, after two infiltrators from the National Right to Work Committee filed a complaint claiming that it was really biased toward Democratic candidates. In fact, Project Vote targets minorities (which probably helps Democrats) but has no contact with campaigns. Though Project Vote mixed contributions from labor, corporations, foundations, and individuals, some of which may have been motivated by partisan goals, the IRS found its voter registration activities to be perfectly legal.

In politics, favors like money are fungible, and politicians necessarily play a triple role of legislator, ombudsman, and fund-raiser. All three roles should be highly attuned to constituent needs, but none of them should be for sale. "When you combine these roles," says one of the most effective voter registration organizers, "it's Russian roulette. It's only a matter of chance who gets caught up in which scandal." Sandy Newman, the director of Project Vote, takes an even more radical position on campaign finance reform than Common Cause. "There ought to be a rule that elected officials can't raise money at all, either for their own campaigns or for charities," he says. "But until there is such a rule, it is as

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appropriate to support organizations that strengthen the democratic process as any other charity."

Until the millennium of genuine campaign finance reform comes, voter registration groups will raise money where they can, and the Democrats are left with a practical political dilemma. Incumbent Democratic legislators like Cranston have no trouble being financially competitive if they are willing to be dependent on sordid characters like Keating. Democratic challengers, meanwhile, have no place to go for financing, and the party remains hopelessly outgunned by its Republican counterpart. Even with soft money, which provides most of the national Democratic Party budget, the Democratic National Committee's total budget is about one-sixth of the Republican National Committee's.

What is the solution to this mess? First, liberals like Cranston should be far less promiscuous about whom they consort with, and which genuinely civic groups they inadvertently compromise. Cranston's real sin was intervening in the regulatory process on behalf of Keating, not raising money for voter registration. Second, the U.S. Government should follow the example of most Western democracies and make enrolling voters and encouraging the franchise a public responsibility, rather than the overt or covert task of do-good groups and parties. In Canada a special government agency seeks out qualified voters and goes door-to-door to maintain the rolls. In much of Europe, voter lists are identical to census lists. The U.S. Government spends money to register voters only in the case of American GIs, and it is currently spending $9 million to register Nicaraguan voters. The decline in voter participation in the United States is a national scandal that ranks right up there with the S&L scandal. Election Day get-out-the-vote drives are of course something entirely different from voter registration. They are the responsibility of candidates and parties—and should be done with "hard," politically accountable, funds.

Finally, this affair once again underscores the need for drastic campaign finance reform. Until then, Common Cause would be more credible to practicing politicians if it tempered its demands for justice with a little mercy. It might begin by making the broadening of the franchise just as high a priority as cleaning up campaign finance. •

Has the unthinkable become the inevitable?

ANSWERING 'THE GERMAN QUESTION'

By James Chace

A month ago the reunification of Germany was unthinkable. Now it is the central issue of world politics. As millions of East Germans scamper through the rubble of the Berlin Wall and a revamped East German leadership promises free elections, the unthinkable is fast becoming the inevitable. For the Bush administration, which has governed by testing the waters of public opinion first, this means planning for something even scarier than unthinkable: the unpollable. Germany's headlong rush into the future demands that the President boldly engage himself in an arena he has so far resisted, even after the fall of the Berlin Wall: policy.

The changes in Eastern Europe have already produced a world unrecognizable to those who have accommodated themselves to the heightened shadows of the cold war for the past four decades. Under what the Soviet Foreign Ministry's spokesman has called the Frank Sinatra Doctrine—that the Soviet Union is willing to let the Eastern Europeans sing "My Way" along with the chairman of the board—the very notion of a Soviet bloc is rapidly becoming an anachronism. The end of Stalinist ideology, if not of history, requires a radically new approach to what must again be capitalized as The German Question. After all, Poland without its ideology is still Poland. Hungary without its ideology is still Hungary. But East Germany without its ideology has no reason for being. As the new head of the East German Communist Party, Egon Krenz, put it, "Without the Communist Party, there is no German Democratic Republic." Precisely.

Ever since West Germany joined NATO in 1955, American policy toward East Germany has been driven largely by West German *Ostpolitik*. Under Konrad Adenauer, Bonn's first chancellor, the premise was that only a Western military and economic buildup could lead to unification: with the passage of time, the Western bloc's greater power would induce the Soviet Union to negotiate the German question and settle it on terms favorable to the West. This meant in effect to deny the legal existence of the German Democratic Republic and the loss of German territories in the East. Adenauer,

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moreover, was a Rhinelander and a Roman Catholic; he was far from unhappy that the once-dominant Protestant provinces of Prussia and Saxony, which now make up the GDR, should be severed from the old Bismarckian Reich. What Adenauer wanted he finally got—a West German Federal Republic closely tied economically and politically to France.

But West German policy ultimately proved sterile as the division of Europe became codified in the 1960s. The United States, in addition, seemed only too content with the status quo, which seemed to promise superpower hegemony over Russia's and America's respective spheres. Washington's passivity in response to the armed Soviet suppressions of Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968 reinforced this view.

To break out of this straitjacket, Bonn's *Ostpolitik* changed in the late 1960s. Under the Social Democratic Chancellor Willy Brandt, the new *Ostpolitik*, as the Stanford political scientist Wolfram Hanreider has pointed out, "envisaged a 'European peace order,' a European context in which the Germans would achieve not reunification . . . but a solution to the German question through a gradual process of 'change through rapprochement,' which would in turn lead to a regulated coexistence (*geregeltes Nebeneinander*) in Europe." Brandt's policy echoed an idea that George Kennan had espoused as early as 1949: to keep Germany partitioned was to "place a premium on the emergence of a new Bismarck" who would try to unify the nation by force. Therefore, Kennan wrote in his memoirs, "if Germany has to be united, then she must be a part of something larger than herself. A united Germany could be tolerable only as an integral part of a united Europe."

What Brandt offered was what Moscow desired above all: the recognition of East Germany, and the acceptance of the Oder-Neisse border between East Germany and Poland and of the territorial and political status quo in Eastern Europe. Once these elements were put in place through treaties signed in the early 1970s, the tremendous growth of West German economic influence in Central Europe and the expansion of far greater contacts between the East and West Germans followed. The United States, after reluctantly following Brandt's lead, embraced the redefined status quo.

Now, however, it is East Germany that has seized the initiative—not the government but the people. It is the people's *Westpolitik* that has set the tone, abetted by Mikhail Gorbachev's urgings that the East German government reform its centralized economic system. The extraordinary nonviolent upheaval of recent weeks—climaxed by the partial dismantling of the Berlin Wall—means that reforms within the Communist system will probably be inadequate to quell the discontent.

What—from Washington's point of view—is to be done? Although the United States neither can nor should set forth the conditions under which German unification should proceed, it has a primary responsibility for bringing about a settlement that will guarantee the security of Europe. Moreover, if the United States does not take a lead in formulating policy toward Central Europe, the Europeans will push ahead on their own, with or without U.S. acquiescence. François Mitterrand has already dined with leaders of the European Community in Paris to discuss the future of Europe in light of West Germany's new policy of open borders. A Western policy toward Central Europe that evolves without American participation at the highest level could lead, at worst, to a U.S. abandonment of Europe and an America thrown back on itself, isolationist and embittered.

A new U.S. policy toward East Germany will require a renewed U.S. engagement in Europe. It will surely require a revamped NATO, whose purpose is no longer simply to deter the Soviet Union from aggressive moves against Western Europe. In fact, what will be needed is a cooperative arrangement with the Soviet Union that will allay Soviet and European fears of both German revanchism and German military and economic power. Finally, sizable amounts of American capital should be invested in the future of Central and Eastern Europe. But the United States cannot abdicate its responsibility to Europe and to the West by simply turning things over to the European Community, a grouping that has no common foreign policy, no common defense structure, and, despite the likely emergence of a single market in 1992, no unified economic organization.

President Bush has proclaimed his desire to move "beyond containment," but he has proposed no specific policies, or even direction, that would provide for an American role in post-cold war Europe. At the moment, the single most important opportunity to lower the level of U.S.-Soviet confrontation in Europe is the conventional arms reduction talks now taking place in Vienna. If these prove successful, and there is every reason to believe they will, then the way may be open to an eventual demilitarization of Germany. Under present conditions if the two Germanys were to merge, their combined strength of 660,000 troops would make the new Germany the overwhelmingly dominant military force on the continent west of the Russian border. But the only Germany that either NATO or the Warsaw Pact could tolerate would be one whose levels of military preparedness were tantamount to demilitarization. The aims of the conventional force discussions between NATO and the Warsaw Pact are to reduce troop levels and weaponry in order to bring firepower into rough equality, and to adopt defensive rather than offensive military postures. Bush has proposed that both superpowers should cut troop strength to Europe to 270,000 each, a formula that would demobilize some 30,000 Americans and 325,000 Soviets. In addition, ceilings on combat aircraft and helicopters will also have to be achieved.

The first cut, however, need not be the final one. As Herbert Okun, the former U.S. ambassador to East Germany, has suggested, further reductions could lead to a thinning out and moving back of forces along the central front, a de facto separation of forces within the

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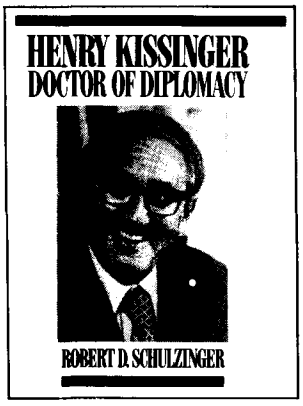

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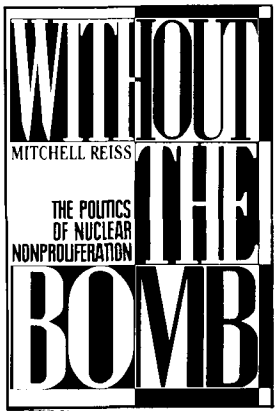

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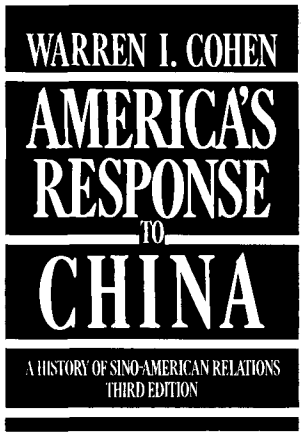

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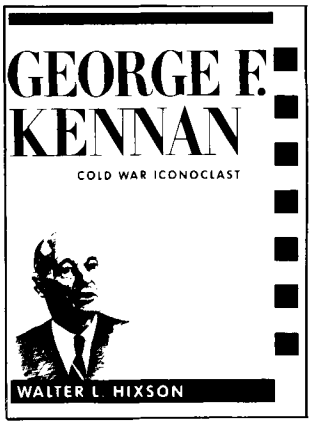

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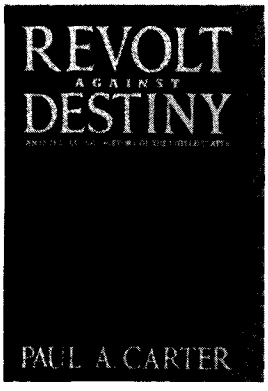

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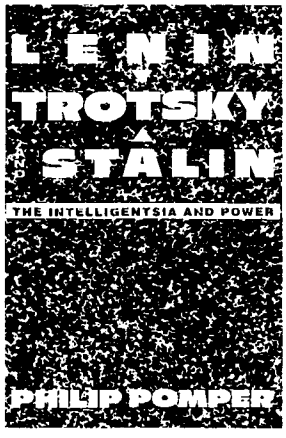

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two Germanys. If the level of arms is reduced and there is a physical disengagement over the next two to five years, then the German question looks quite different and far less threatening.

Under this scenario, however, both NATO and the Warsaw Pact would remain in place. Mikhail Gorbachev reportedly told the French foreign minister after the opening of the Berlin Wall that "now is not the time to break up established political and economic institutions." Yet Gorbachev might not stand in the way of a confederation of the two Germanys, which would mean that goods and people could move freely between East and West but the two German states would retain sovereignty. Such a confederation might or might not have a common currency, a common "Council of Germany," or a common foreign policy; but its two component states would each retain the right to withdraw from the arrangement. East Germany, for example, could retain a nominally "socialist" character, with Prussia-Saxony operating a plural political system and running a market-oriented economy.

As a result of Brandt's *Ostpolitik*, East Germany already has special arrangements that allow it access to the Common Market; in addition, Bonn extends it an annual subsidy of between 4.5 billion deutsche marks and 5 billion deutsche marks. Imports from East Germany can enter West Germany duty-free, and farm produce is not subject to European Community levies. West Germany has provided more than two billion deutsche marks ($1.1 billion) over the past 20 years, mainly for the repair and extension of East German roads and inland waterways and for an electric power system that will link East Germany and later West Berlin into a Western grid. Although the East Germans have worked for 40 years within a highly centralized economy, contrary to the conventional wisdom it would not be an enormous task to integrate East Germany's economy with Western capitalism. And West German businessmen are far more likely to invest in East Germany than in other parts of Central Europe.

Moreover, legal emigration of ethnic Germans from Poland and the Soviet Union has grown to a point where many West Germans no longer welcome these poor relations with quite the same enthusiasm. And the exodus of East Germans to the Federal Republic has done nothing to allay West German apprehension over further emigration from the East. By the end of this year, well over half a million will have arrived in West Germany, 300,000 of whom are ethnic Germans from the Soviet Union and Poland.

Reunification on West German soil is not how the Bonn government envisages the solution to the German problem, and it is pushing for greater economic incentives for the citizens of East Germany. The West German chancellor's foreign policy adviser, Horst Teltschik, said: "We believe [reunification] will take a long time, and that for the immediate future, the only realistic policy is thorough reform in the GDR." The new East German Communist team is also hoping that this will take place. By allowing free movement across open borders, the East German leadership is buying time, betting that most East Germans would rather stay home if they come to believe a better political and economic system is in the offing. But if the East Germans are even a little like Poles and Hungarians, this will rapidly spell the end of the Communists as the ruling party.

From this perspective, a confederation of the two sovereign Germanys—not the unified Bismarckian state that lasted 75 years—is a reasonable answer to the German question, acceptable to policy-makers in Moscow, Washington, Paris, London—and even Bonn.

But history rarely provides neat endings. What if the East Germans don't want to remain separate? As Robert Gerald Livingston, the director of the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, has said: "The East Germans who are fleeing have lent credibility to Bonn's claim that it alone is the legitimate representative of this one German nation." You can't be a "national Communist," Henry Kissinger writes. "As a nationalist you have to be for unification." Nor can the West Germans dodge the consequences of their rhetoric of reunification; domestic German politics will not permit it. And the Americans have repeated their own commitment to German reunification for 40 years—from Harry S Truman to George Bush.

The original postwar planners certainly intended a unified, demilitarized Germany. The 1945 Potsdam Conference resolved to treat the defeated nation as a single economic unit, under four military zones of occupation—U.S., British, French, and Soviet. A four-power Allied Control Council was set up to deal with questions involving Germany as a whole. But Stalin's harsh political repression in Eastern Europe, combined with Soviet insistence on reparations, destroyed the plan. The Allied Control Council itself went out of business in 1948 when the Soviets withdrew from it; that same year the Soviets imposed a blockade of West Berlin, cutting off travel and transportation between the city and West Germany. By the time the blockade was lifted in 1949, a separate German state had been created out of the American, French, and British occupation zones. The Western occupation ended, and by 1955 the West German Federal Republic was acknowledged as a sovereign state and became a member of NATO. Similarly, East Germany—the "German Democratic Republic"—became a member of the Warsaw Pact.

There is still no German peace treaty signed by the victorious powers of World War II. The agreement under which the three Western victors recognized the new West German state provided that any final arrangement for Germany would require one. Pending "the conclusion of a peace settlement," the agreement notes pointedly, the three Western powers would retain "the rights and responsibilities . . . relating to Berlin and to Germany as a whole, including the reunification of Germany and a peace settlement."

Imagine for a moment the lineaments of a reunified

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Germany. If the two Germanys were one and the East Germans worked as hard as the West Germans, they would produce half again more than either France or Britain. A united Germany would doubtless be a federal state, as West Germany is now, rather than a highly centralized one like France. This would continue to give Prussia and Saxony no small measure of regional distinctiveness. A Germany that was also effectively demilitarized (it would make do with a small self-defense force along Austrian lines) would be even stronger economically. A unified German state whose military status was circumscribed by agreement between the Germans and the victorious powers of World War II is the only unified Germany that the United States, the Soviet Union, and the other European powers would permit. It may be hard to believe that a German nation of some 80 million would agree to strict limitations on troop levels, but if that is the price of unification, the Germans might well be willing to pay it.

A demilitarized Germany, however, need not mean a Germany without the presence of foreign troops. Indeed, smaller contingents of both Russian and American troops would probably have to be stationed there—in the American case, to give an earnest of our intention to defend the new European system, whether it be threatened by a resurgent Germany or a bellicose Russia. Even some small number of French and British troops might remain. The presence of foreign troops on German soil, however, should not be seen as some form of an occupation army, even at very low levels, but as part of a new European security system that would replace the NATO and Warsaw Pact military organizations, in line with Ronald Steel's suggestion that NATO's last mission will be "to achieve a settlement with the Soviet Union over the future of Europe."

The American nuclear guarantee to defend a European settlement would remain, though the continent would doubtless be shorn of battlefield nuclear weapons. Here too a new European security system that involves the United States and the Soviet Union working together could produce a joint statement on nuclear strategy. Under the agreements expected to emerge from the START talks, the superpowers already will have reduced their warheads effectively by one-third. This would still leave them with about 9,000 warheads each. A second stage would be to cut that number by half. And a third and final stage could even reduce nuclear weapons to less than 1,000 on each side, including the French and British nuclear forces. Once national policy rests on the conviction that nuclear weapons are no longer the primary bulwark against conventional wars, this approach seems feasible.

Despite the need for the superpowers to guarantee the settlement, no solution to the German problem will be found outside of an all-European context. As General de Gaulle put it a quarter century ago, "The German problem is, indeed, *the* European problem." He went on to add: "It must be recognized, first of all by Germany, that any settlement of which it would be the subject would necessarily imply a settlement of its frontiers and of its armament in agreement with all its neighbors, those of the East and those of the West."

The emergence of a strengthened European Community after 1992 will exert a powerful attraction on its neighbors to the east. Hungary is almost sure to be admitted to some form of associate membership, and Poland, as one prominent French businessman put it, "will soon be our Mexico." Once Hungary joins Poland in a system of greater political freedom and economic pluralism, can Czechoslovakia be far behind? Under these conditions, Germany must be anchored in the Community to ensure further its political stability. As François Heisbourg, director of London's International Institute for Strategic Studies, put it in an interview in *Newsweek*: "If Germany moves toward unity in a self-centered, neo-nationalist sense, that would be disastrous." Unity achieved in agreement with the other members of the European Community would be a very different thing. That is what Mitterrand has in mind when he says he is "not afraid" of German reunification.

The American engagement in Europe, however, cannot rest on military prowess. A German-dominated Europe is in no one's—not even Germany's—interest, even if that domination is wholly economic. The United States must invest substantially in market-oriented industries in Central and Eastern Europe in order to further its own foreign policy goals. The profligate economic policies of the Reagan and Bush administrations, alas, have severely hobbled our ability to act decisively in this realm. The Federal Republic alone is prepared to pony up $2.2 billion in economic assistance to Poland; the United States finds itself hard put to offer $837.5 million to Poland and Hungary combined. Until the United States puts its own economic house in order so that its spending no longer has to be sustained by foreign monies (now on an annual scale of half a trillion dollars), it will continue to lack the wherewithal to pursue a credible foreign policy.

To confront the reality of German reunification is not to urge it. But to refuse to recognize its probability is to allow events in Europe to control U.S. policy. The United States must start to plan for a new Europe, even a new military structure that will involve working together with the Soviet Union to guarantee a European settlement. For half a century after Waterloo, the nations of Europe feared a resurgent, aggressive France, one that had ravaged Europe for almost 200 years; but after 1815 France was never again an aggressor nation. If Germany does become reunified, it may well be at long last a satisfied country, content to try to manage the economies of Europe while a wary Russia and America ensure that any warlike German ambitions are held in check. Only by the participation of both superpowers, along with the members of the European Community, can there finally emerge a "common European house," in Gorbachev's words, that will be safe to live in. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Worlds Apart

Jim Jarmusch's new film is called **Mystery Train** (Orion Classics), and like the first two of his released here—*Stranger Than Paradise* and *Down by Law*—it's quintessentially on two themes: photography and film form. The new film comes more quickly at that quintessence because the story elements seem more transparent, less engaging in themselves.

As before, musicians figure in *Mystery Train*—not just on the sound track but by playing parts. As before, some of the characters are foreigners: here there are a young Japanese pair, a young Italian widow, and a cockney drifter. As before, they serve to magnify the strangeness of the familiar American landscape.

Each of the nationalities has a separate story, set in the seamier parts of Memphis. Those three stories never really interweave: they merely pass through the same seedy Memphis hotel. A gunshot in one story is heard in the other two. The sound of a woman in sexual ecstasy in one story is heard in another. A young woman gets involved in one strand without knowing that her ex-boyfriend is in another.

The film is no mystical enterprise, implying a master hand that weaves a design. Jarmusch implies only that to follow your own road is to touch other roads, a fact usually unknown unless there happens to be a camera observing. The young Japanese pair—she twittery, he ultra-cool—have come to Memphis to see Graceland, Elvis Presley's home, and are resting overnight before they make the pilgrimage. The widow encounters delays in shipping her husband's coffin back to Italy and has to wait overnight. The cockney and two other men are involved in an armed robbery and hole up temporarily at the hotel. At the end, all of them leave the hotel and Memphis.

These three narratives, not engrossing in themselves, serve as viewing points for American patterns, patterns formed largely by pop culture. The worship of Elvis brings the two teenagers all the way from Yokohama; to them Memphis is Elvis-land. The Italian widow, forced to stay the night, stops at a news shop for an American magazine and is burdened by the owner with a heap of them that she carries like a penance; she later encounters more Americana, including a visit in her room from Elvis's ghost. The cockney and friends seem to have modeled their behavior on a C-movie (not quite a B). Jarmusch is not a satirist; he doesn't caricature these patterns. He presents them as current powers, and he does it so dryly that we see them more clearly.

Again his pace is as slow as he dares; rather, it is we who think it's daring—he is simply pacing the film as he wants to. More Jarmusch hallmarks: he finishes sequences with an astringent quick fade to black (occasionally a slow fade, which seems almost decadent in this context). The cinematography itself—done by Robby Müller in color, instead of the black and white he used in *Down by Law*—seems intent on emphasizing the frame as an agreed-upon fiction. Life doesn't end at the borders of a shot: the framing of a shot is just one way that the film form exercises control over us.

Jarmusch's actors, which is not quite the right term, reflect his attempts at transparency and candor. They do just enough to fulfill the requirements of the moment; not bad actors, they are just not trying to be "good." Masatoshi Nagasi and Youki Kudoh as the Japanese boy and girl supply the needed colors; Nicoletta Braschi *is*, apparently, more or less the woman she is playing; Joe Strummer is visible but no more, as the cockney. Only Screamin' Jay Hawkins, the singer who plays the night clerk of the hotel, is so brimming with personality himself that he can't help giving a performance.

Jarmusch has well established a style and a persona. Will that be all? Or, like Godard, who also quickly achieved a signature, will he move on to further risks? An admirer hopes so, hopes that he will want to use film for more than a chance to show film's truths and falsities.

In less than a year since *Dangerous Liaisons* comes another film made from the Laclos novel. This one is called **Valmont** (Orion), after the leading male character; was directed by Milos Forman, whose last work was *Amadeus*; and was adapted from Laclos by Jean-Claude Carrière (with, uncredited, Forman). Carrière has had one of the most active of screenwriting careers since he began in 1961, a career especially famous for his many collaborations with Luis Buñuel and especially blotted by his col-

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Crimes and Misdemeanors. *Woody Allen's best (though he didn't write quite all of it) deals with morality and the point or pointlessness of life. Good acting, smooth directing. (Reviewed 11/13/89)* **My Left Foot.** *Excellent. Adapted from the autobiography of Christy Brown, the Irish victim of cerebral palsy who wrote and painted with his left foot. No slush. Strength, anger, and, incredibly, fun. Wonderful acting. (11/27/89)* **sex, lies, and videotape.** *Subtle and quasi-mysterious exploration of the sexual ambience in which four young people live. Steven Soderbergh's first film is extraordinary. (9/4/89)* **Henry V.** *Kenneth Branagh dared to adapt, direct, and star in this Shakespearean epic, inviting comparison with Laurence Olivier. Branagh is not yet near Olivier as an actor; but as a whole, his film beautifully justifies his daring. (12/4/89)* **—SK**

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laboration with Peter Brook on the atrocious *Swann in Love*.

Here Carrière falters again. *Valmont* is called a free adaptation of Laclos. This is like calling Riunite a free adaptation of Mouton Rothschild. The time and milieu are unchanged in the film—late 18th century, French aristocrats—and so are some of the events. But there are radical alterations. I mention only two. Madame de Tourvel, the virtuous young wife who is seduced by Valmont solely because he has bet that he can do it, does not go mad and die: she is forgiven by her husband. Cécile, the virgin whom Valmont seduces en route to his main quarry, does not enter a nunnery: pregnant with Valmont's child, she marries her middle-aged fiancé.

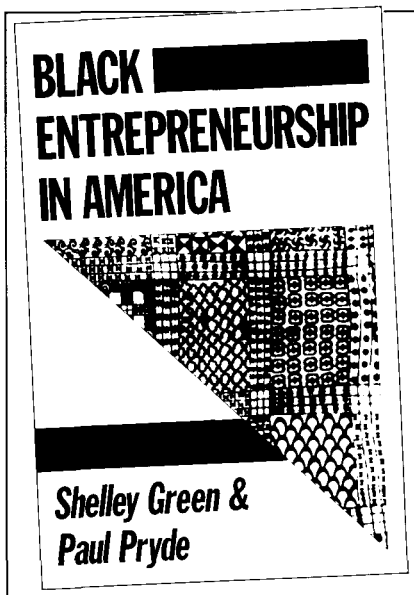
After these changes and more, what is left? Only flouncy intrigues, after which Valmont—without the real punishment of falling in love with one of his victims—goes to his death in a duel self-sacrificially, as if nobly cleaning his slate. *Dangerous Liaisons*, which was adapted by Christopher Hampton for the screen better than he did it for the stage, moved toward Laclos's theme. Under the glitter, it's the Tolstoyan theme "God Sees the Truth but Waits." To put it otherwise: in the social sphere, cruelty is the most expensive pleasure, and emotional exploitation is the most expensive cruelty.

In the earlier film, the aristocratic tone, essential for the vicious boredom in the work, was unfulfilled by an all-American cast. Here there's a range of accents from Fabia Drake's muffins-and-tea English accent as old Rosemonde to the flat heaven-knows-what accent of the inept sprat who plays Danceny, the youngest lover. It's hard to believe that all these people are living at the same time in the same class.

Colin Firth is more credible than John Malkovich as the irresistible lover, Valmont. Annette Bening as the diabolical Meurteuil, though she doesn't suggest the whir of Glenn Close's computer brain, is a sly and pretty viper. The best performance comes from Fairuza Balk, charming as Cécile, the initiate into love and into the intrigues thereof.

Miroslav Ondricek, the cinematographer who has been working with Forman since 1964 (in Czechoslovakia), delivers the requisite dazzle. The sound track nicely catches the rustle of the silks in Theodor Pistek's good costumes. But none of the visual qualities equals those in the prior film.

Forman says that he and Carrière were well into the screenplay when the earlier film was announced; that, knowing his tempo, he couldn't beat it to the theaters; that he kept on working because nobody told him not to. But he knew that he would have to compete, and it's not clear



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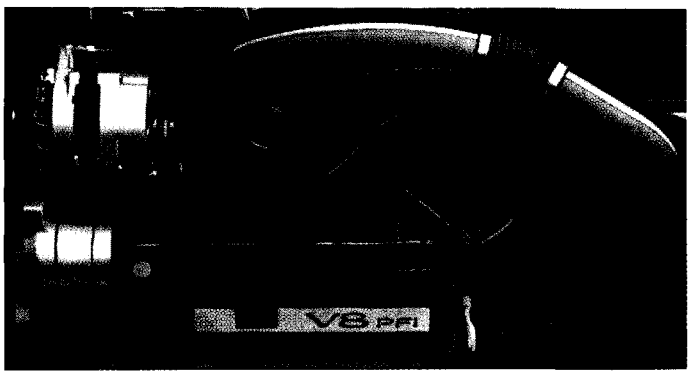

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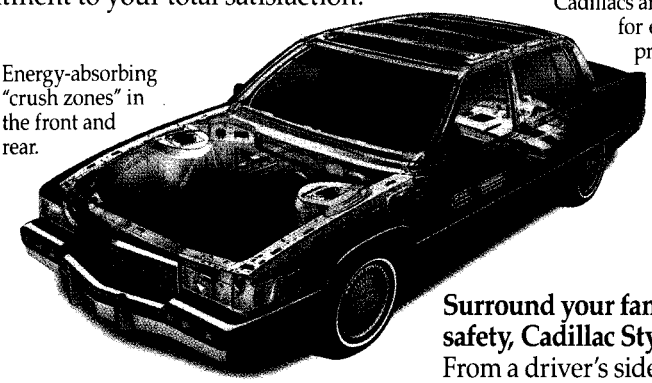

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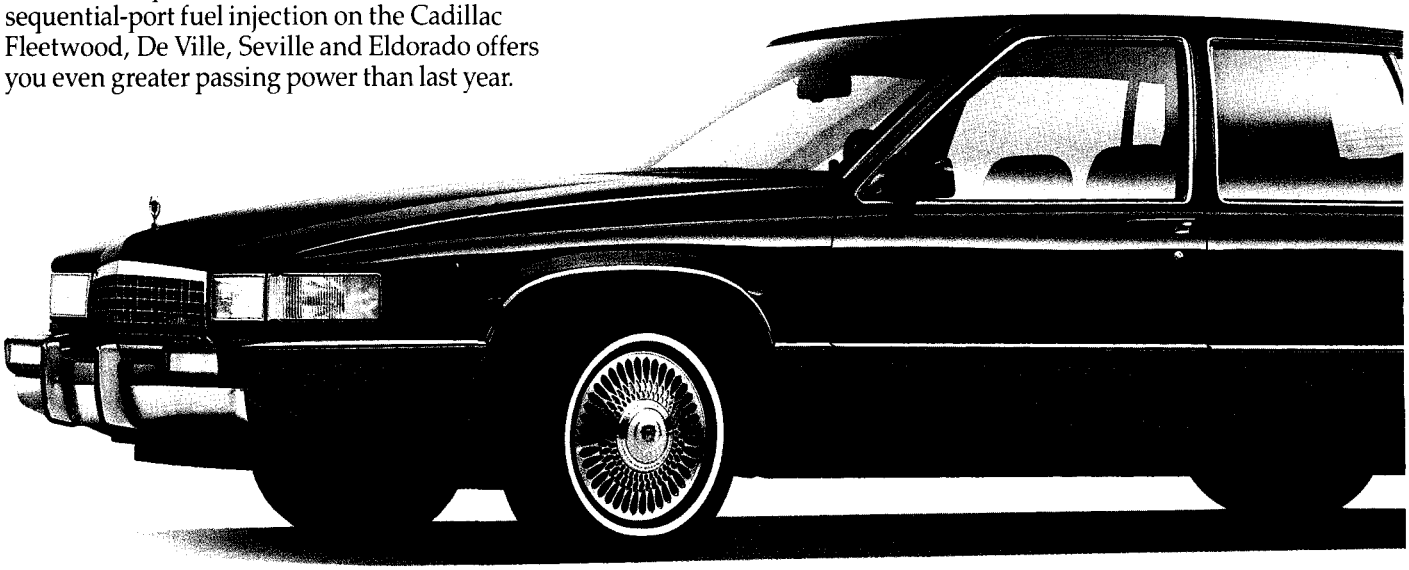

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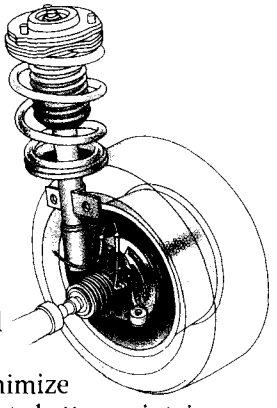

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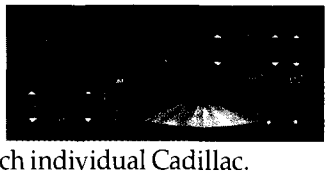

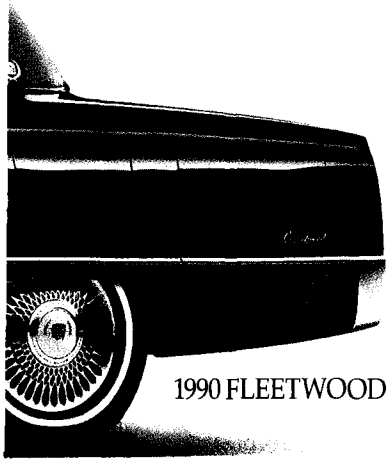

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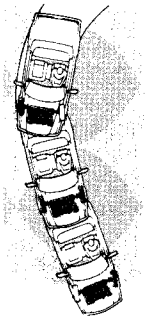

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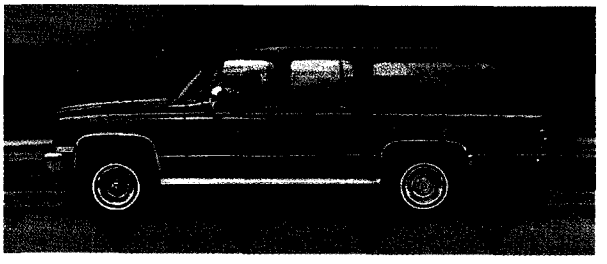

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why he thought he could, what he thought he had to offer that, Laclos or not, would reward a viewer. In every way, the effort seems wasted.

Worse than that. Forman says he hasn't seen the other film, directed by Stephen Frears. Perhaps that's just as well. Frears directed with a more lithe and responsive line, making the movement of each scene fit the scene's intent. *Valmont* is the work of a director who has sometimes been clever, but not here. •

Robert Brustein on Theater

Disaster at the NEA

This first official act of John E. Frohnmayer, newly appointed chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, was a disaster. By unilaterally withdrawing a panel-approved $10,000 grant to the Artists Space and AIDS exhibition, he transformed the NEA, in one fell swoop, from chief advocate of the arts in this country into another of its philistine adversaries. Frohnmayer claimed he was not reacting to the homosexual content of the exhibit, though the language of his letter ("the message has been clearly and strongly conveyed to us that Congress means business") suggests how cowed he is by the legislative fulminations over the Mapplethorpe and Serrano exhibits, and by the ensuing Congressional measure that blocked NEA funds to materials "considered obscene, including sadomasochism, homoeroticism, the sexual exploitation of children or individuals engaged in sex acts" unless the materials have "serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value."

This measure was intended to defeat a more radical proposal by Jesse Helms, but it is essentially the Helms amendment hedged by the Supreme Court test for obscenity. It is unclear about who is to make these judgments of value, nor did Frohnmayer assume the judicial role. Indeed, he objected not to what he called the "questionable taste" of the show but rather to the political content of the catalog, insofar as it criticized certain prominent people for their insensitivity to issues of art and sexuality—"a very angry protest," in Frohnmayer's words, "against the specific events and individuals involved over the last eight months in the most recent arts legislation in Congress. It's very inflammatory." Incredibly, Frohnmayer set out to penalize the Artists Space not for failing to meet the new obscenity tests, but for conforming to them—for publishing a catalog that fulfills the Supreme Court criterion of redeeming political value.

This was a curious development, to say the least; and it created a firestorm. Frohnmayer's action went well beyond the obscenity issue to become a fundamental breach of First Amendment rights. Still, restraint on creative freedom and dissenting thought—the proper name for that is censorship—was always the hidden agenda of Congressional attacks on artistic license, so in a sense the chairman's gaffe was salutary in dramatizing the danger of enacting restraining edicts in the first place. Clearly the compromise measure was a mistake.

The well-intentioned Sidney Yates thought he was heading Helms off at the pass, only to let him in through a crack in the wall. As Ted Potter of the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art put it, "We could see immediately that the compromise was a hunting license for ultraconservatives, but we didn't expect the first shot to be fired by the NEA." With Congress imposing restrictions on art with sexual content, and the chairman blocking funds to art with political content, soon the only authorized art would be the Carolina landscapes in Helms's office. Frohnmayer seems to have found his function to be not just the Senator's official censor, but also his personal curator.

By a single action, Frohnmayer managed to undermine his staff and the panel system that traditionally insulated the arts from government intervention. Following a barrage of protests, including Leonard Bernstein's rejecting the National Medal of the Arts, he later tried to modify his stand, saying he regretted using the word "political," and offering to help overturn the anti-obscenity statute. Then, as this column was going to press, he decided to return the grant to the Artists Space. But considerable damage has still been done. To protect their grants from controversy, many artists and institutions will become more craven, but some will surely grow more provocative. Does the NEA have enough thought police to monitor every production in the land? Will funds for oversight begin to exceed funds for the arts? And can our nation afford a reputation for cultural intolerance when East bloc culture is opening up? Clearly the issue is no longer whether taxpayers should be required to contribute to obscene or unpopular expression, but whether government funding is to be restricted to officially approved art.

It is highly likely that the National Endowment for the Arts will become a political football in the coming months, and there's a real question whether it will continue to survive. If it does, its structure will have to be fundamentally overhauled to protect its integrity and its independence from external and internal interference. I have two suggestions. First, the NEA should become a true endowment, with a large base of interest-bearing funds sufficient to support its grants. This would unencumber the NEA's money, thereby freeing the agency from undue reliance on annual Congressional appropriations, not to mention uninformed Congressional oversight. Admittedly, this plan would initially require a massive injection of federal seed money, but such an endowment could attract private funds as well, in the manner of a public university.

Second, discussion of the NEA's accountability should be addressed by analogy not with an elective but an appointive model, which was the intent of its enabling legislation. Elected representatives are responsible to the people and to consensus pressures. But the quality of art and artists cannot be properly evaluated by majoritarian rule, any more than the public is qualified to vote on the products of science or intellect. The model for the NEA is not the legislature, but the judiciary—the Supreme Court, for example, a body of trained Justices, proposed to the President by the Attorney General following the counsel of legal experts, and then approved by Congress. The Court is hardly immune to the political process (Harrold Carswell's recommendation was once defended with the argument that "mediocrity" deserved judicial representation); but its seats are reserved, in theory at least, for the finest legal minds in the nation.

Although the High Court also depends on "taxpayers' dollars," it, like the NEA, may very well make decisions unpopular with the vast majority; the flag desecration case is a recent example. But since Justices are accountable to the Constitution rather than to the people, they can formulate their judgments with more impunity. I would argue that artists are also accountable to a higher code than popularity (to the intrinsic quality of the work, for example, which is evaluated by peers but determined by posterity), and therefore should be protected by a governmental agency defined not by concepts of representative democracy, but rather

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by ideals of leadership and excellence.

That is nowadays called "elitism." The fact that this word has become an expletive suggests at least one reason why proposals like these are usually mocked or ignored. Another is the present climate of hostility toward the arts. In such an atmosphere, the NEA, if it survives, is more likely to become so hedged with strictures that no adventurous artist or arts institution would be willing or able to apply for grants. The non-profit art world will either have to learn to live without government funding, which means severely curtailing its already diminished activities, or go under. The outlook is bleak—more bleak than I can remember since the founding of the NEA—and it is particularly disheartening after more than 30 years of government-sponsored growth and achievement. We are now witnessing how what Yeats called "the mad intellect of democracy" can chew up a whole civilization, how what Ibsen called "the corpse in the cargo" can poison the entire ship.

One example of the kind of non-subsidized artistic event we're likely to get in the future is the current production of *The Threepenny Opera* at the Lunt-Fontanne Theatre. This familiar Brecht-Weill musical masterpiece opened recently to a huge advance and dismal reviews. It's not *quite* as terrible as you've heard. It simply has no other reason for being than to make money. Since Brecht believed greed to be the primary motive of humankind (he wrote *Threepenny Opera* as a theatrical demonstration of Proudhon's axiom that property is theft), the play's ferocious ironies are virtually obliterated by the irony of its commercial exploitation.

The celebrated rock singer Sting has shown acting talent in movies, and it's not his fault that he's been so uncomfortably (and cynically) miscast as Macheath. Actually, he's rather sweet in the part, shy, retiring, even a little demure. Brecht wanted the character to be an aging predatory businessman with a paunch. Sting comes on like a modest English gentleman with a sword stick—Douglas Fairbanks Jr. minus the swashbuckle. Still, it's traditional to misplay this part. Scott Merrill, in Carmen Capalbo's off-Broadway production, played Macheath like a spidery dancer, tipping his hat forward over his eyes like Bob Fosse; Raul Julia, in Richard Foreman's Lincoln Center version, came closer to the role as a sensual, sleepy, heavy-lidded thug. But the only actor I've known to get Mackie Messer right was Wolf Kaiser in the 1965 Berliner Ensemble production, playing a suave, thickening,middle-aged Lothario—brutish and forlorn, with the heavy grace and sad lethargy of a basset hound.

Sting occupies the space, that's all, performs a few calisthenics in his prison cell, and sings Mack's songs in a pleasant reedy voice that is totally without grit. I'm sorry to see him take the rap for this unfortunate production, since the blame really rests with the producers—and with the director who, after casting some accomplished actors, totally abandoned them to their own devices. Reports say that rehearsing this play was like working in a state of nature—the production more resembles a state of anarchy. Everyone seems to be performing in a different style: Nancy Ringham (replacing the ill Maureen McGover like a milk-fed Rodgers a stein innocent; Ethyl Eiche the part of the Ballard Si were doing Igor in a Franke Larry Marshall as Tiger seems to be acting Sportin Life in *Porgy and Bess*; and the experienced Brecht-Weillian Alvin Epstein turns the ravenous Peachum into a haute bourgeois in cavalry mustaches. (Epstein is an old associate of mine, so I recognize his mannerisms when he has no help from a di-

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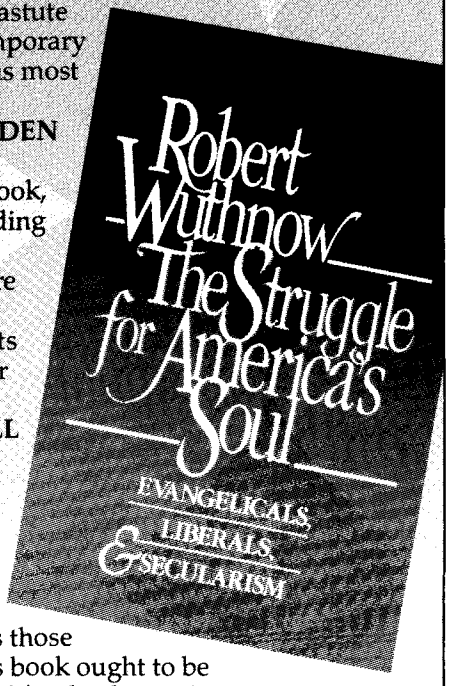

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.r.) Only Georgia Brown as Mrs. .achum proves able to establish a coherent character, and only by totally ignoring her colleagues in an isolated, concentrated space of her own.

Everything conspires to sink this production, starting with the lavish theater itself—an overdecorated gold-leaf palace flecked with mythological statuary. How do you produce a play about the poor (and interpolate pity for the homeless) in these surroundings? The orchestra sits on a platform onstage, as at the Berliner Ensemble, but Weill's marvelous music is muffled by hanging draperies and clothes. In such acoustical chaos, you can't hear Michael Feingold's dialogue or lyrics, though neither represent his most congenial Brecht translations (an example, and an apt comment on the whole event: "No wonder we're unhappy; the whole thing is so crappy"). Mack's final speech—"What is the robbing of a bank to the founding of a bank"—has been cut, which I took as a blushing admission of how this Marxist work had been turned into a Broadway savings and loan. •

Prince Charles's war against Modern architecture.

The Winds of Windsorism

BY HERBERT MUSCHAMP

Tudor, Regency, Georgian, Victorian, Edwardian: as every suburban real estate agent knows, some of the most attractive styles in the history of architecture and design took their names from British monarchs. Until a few years ago, however, probably no one imagined that there were still more floats to come in this stately parade of royally sanctioned decorative art. I doubt very much, for instance, that the current monarch either hoped or wished her name linked to the "Festival of Britain" style, a prissy modernoid mode named after the 1951 event held two years before her coronation, much less to the style called "Brutalism" that captivated architects a few years later.

But then, in 1984, rounding the bend of the peculiar time warp in modern history known as Post-Modernism, the heir to the throne loped into view, cupped hand waving, media horns blowing, cameras running as he stirred the stagnant air of contemporary Britain with a stream of sophomoric insults aimed at proposed architectural projects. Monstrous carbuncle. Giant glass stump. Old 1930s wireless. Frankenstein monster. Last year this killer wit fleshed out his views to the length of a 75-minute BBC documentary, *A Vision of Britain*; and now there's a book of the same title, based on the broadcast. Sumptuously illustrated with watercolors by the Prince, paintings by Turner and Canaletto, and dozens of color photos of buildings he dislikes and those he favors, its endpapers and chapter headings adorned with his personal crest, the book sets forth the tenets of a new Power Look. Windsorism, anyone?

The selling point of the book is that it marks the first publication of Charles's fully developed Ten Principles—"a set of sensible and widely-agreed rules, saying what people can and what they cannot do." But some may find the book more useful as a textbook study in the use of language to prop up the privileges and the self-esteem of a declining nation's pooped-out ruling class. Anyone who's spent time on the sceptered isle

A Vision of Britain: A Personal View of Architecture
by H.R.H. The Prince of Wales
(Doubleday, 160 pp., $40)

will recognize with a shudder the mixture of heavy cream laced with bile that Charles pours out in his prose: the false modesty ("I humbly acknowledge my lack of academic credentials"), the scribble, scribble, eh, Mr. Gibbon? contempt for achievement (the 20th century has produced no great architects, only "great architects"), the ostrich stance toward the present ("Many architects and developers believe that architecture should reflect the spirit of the age—whatever that might be!"), and the utterly charming loopiness ("Have you noticed how unfinished so many new housing developments seem nowadays without chimneys?").

There's nothing specifically English about the most egregious of Charles's rhetorical devices. It is the "silent majority" tactic cherished by demagogues everywhere. There would be more substance to Charles's "personal view of architecture," as his subtitle describes it, if he didn't feel the need to prop himself up with populist crutches on every other page. But in a way that's the real subject of this book: not architecture, but the contract between a Post-Modern prince and his subjects. He wants us to know that "99 percent [of the letters he received after his BBC broadcast] agreed with my feelings," that "although I'll be criticized for my ideas [by 'porcupine-like professionals and cantankerous critics'] I'm sure there is general agreement" among the good folks. No doubt Charles does feel deeply for Madge Atkins, the resident of a Modern high-rise building that has developed such serious structural problems that water pours in through the cracks and the window frames keep falling out. But, like silent majoritarians everywhere, Charles exploits the plight of the poor Madges of the world to hide the cracks in his own privileged position. It's Madge's job to wrap the populist veneer over a sagging structure of privilege.

As for the Ten Principles themselves, they are intellectually closer to Hints from Heloise than to Ruskin's Seven Lamps, but they are reasonable enough. Buildings, Charles advises, should enhance the landscape (The Place); their size, and the proportions of their constituent elements, should match their cultural and functional significance (Hierarchy); they should respect the proportions of the human form and that of the existing physical context (Scale); their exteriors should also relate visually to their surroundings (Harmony); they should provide a sense of shelter from the world (Enclosure); utilize the physical resources of the region (Materials); offer pleasure to the eye (Decoration); incorporate paintings and sculptures (Art); remain undisturbed by visual distractions (Signs and Lights); reflect the needs and desires of the public (Community).

These are all useful things to keep in mind when we're looking at architecture. The problem is not with the Principles, but rather with the thesis they have been constructed to support. These ideas, Charles believes, are "a simple extension of the rules and patterns that have guided architects and builders for centuries"—until, that is, the postwar period, when suddenly Things Went Wrong. Suddenly, in the 1950s and 1960s, architects abandoned the time-honored lessons of the forefathers and set out across the land on an orgy of destruction, tearing down beloved landmarks, herding the populace into bleak boxes, trampling on all the values the English have held dear since the dawn of time. Suddenly there was *Modernism*: concrete bunkers on the Thames to house, of all things, the performing arts; blocks of functionalist

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council flats scarring the countryside, spoiling the view.

There's only one solution: send the architects back to school for a classical education. Let them relearn "the true and ancient *art* of architecture." Let them reclaim the heritage of the traditional styles. And Charles makes quite clear that the matter of style takes precedence even over the best of his Principles, the advocacy of community involvement. "I feel if architects are not thoroughly versed in an architectural tradition, Gothic or Classical, no amount of community consultation can produce really good buildings."

Charles gets a lot of mileage, in this book and in the press, by presenting himself as a fearless interloper, willing to endure the scorn of architects for venturing onto their territory without the proper credentials. But the problem is not that Charles is not qualified to speak about architecture. The problem is that he presents himself as an advocate of history, and he knows next to nothing about it.

"There's nothing wrong in learning from the past," Charles pouts. There certainly isn't. One day he ought to give it a whirl. Modern architecture was not born the day before yesterday. At a modest estimate, its history is 200 years long. It begins in late 18th-century France with a show of initiative by architects seeking to reform the environment in accordance with ideas that evolved, over the years, to embrace aims not dissimilar to Charles's Principles: to enhance the lives of those previously disfranchised by the restriction of "architecture" to socially powerful institutions; to find a common language for building that can be understood without access to privileged information; to integrate architecture with painting, sculpture, nature, and open space; to construct cities based on reason, harmony, proportion, and the hierarchical relationships of social institutions. Unfortunately, being born the embodiment of tradition has not endowed Charles with either a knowledge of history or a capacity to interpret it.

If Charles is so intent on recovering national heritage, let him ponder the extent to which the Modern program was framed by British architects, designers, and critics, many of whom had passed into history long before the dreaded 1950s rolled around: by John Ruskin, who brought to architectural criticism a sense of morality and a voice for the working class; William Morris, who encoded these messages in household furnishings; Joseph Paxton, whose Crystal Palace of 1851 (under the patronage of Prince Albert) gave the public its

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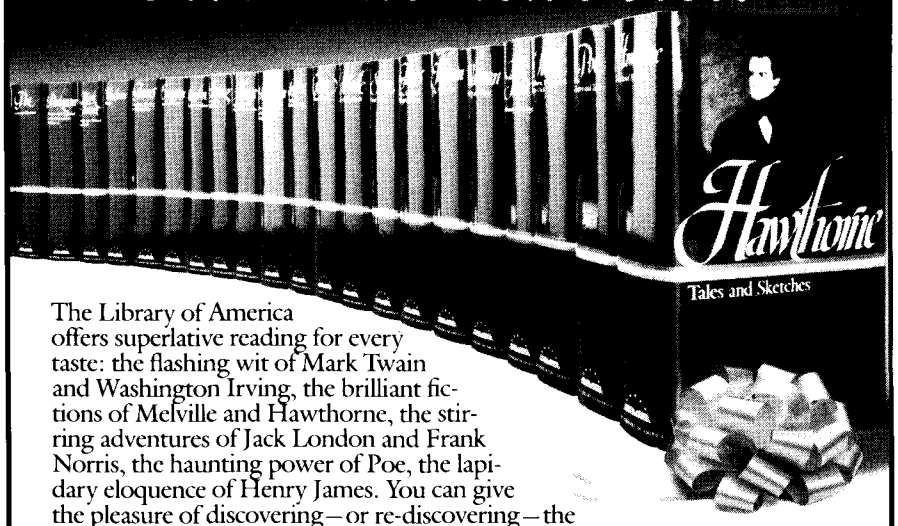

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first look at the architectural potential of modern materials and construction methods; Lewis Cubitt, whose design for King's Cross train station demonstrated that modern functions such as mechanized transportation need not hide behind historical facades to be dignified; William Lethaby, who in 1893 called on his fellow architects to devise "a symbolism real and comprehensible by the vast majority of spectators"; Charles Rennie Mackintosh, the Scotsman who turned this idea into built form; Ebenezer Howard, inventor of the "Garden City"; Nikolaus Pevsner, the adopted Englishman whose classic histories of the Modern Movement clearly (if somewhat overgenerously) established the importance of the English contribution to the formation of the Modern canon; and, closer to our time, to Peter and Alison Smithson, who, in the 1960s, modified the canon to create an urban vocabulary for Britain's postwar welfare state.

Which is hardly to say that the Modern Movement, as codified in the years after 1923, was primarily an English invention. If we're going to talk about orgies of destruction, let's not forget that the movement's internationalism, which Charles finds so deplorable, had its roots in a very big Thing Gone Wrong called World War I. Modern architects not only sought to rebuild a continent ravaged by that war; they were also determined to build across national differences in the hope of preventing a repeat of the catastrophe into which Europe's ruling classes had plunged a civilization.

Nor does the British contribution to 20th-century design die out with the waning, in the 1960s, of the International Style. For the past 20 years, the Architectural Association in London has rivaled and perhaps even surpassed the Bauhaus as a training ground for young architects. It has spawned a generation of some of the most gifted practitioners now entering the building phase of their careers: Zaha Hadid, Bernard Tschumi, Rem Koolhaas, Peter Wilson, Nigel Coates, to name a few. Coates, an architect scarcely less outspoken than Charles in his contempt for the British architectural establishment, has sought particularly to adapt urbanism to the social issues of Thatcher's Britain. In a series of radical, visionary projects such as the 1986 "Gamma City," Coates and his "NATO" group have tapped the driving street smarts that have energized British fashion, music, and commercial design.

A history of two centuries may seem a flash in the pan compared with the 2,500-year-old legacy Charles claims to represent. The truth is that the Modern tradition is no less venerable than the heritage he proposes to restore. Builders have indeed been active in the British isles since prehistoric times, but the tradition Charles holds up for us to emulate—the idea that "the styles" of Gothic and Classical should be recovered from the past—is a product only of the Victorian age. Historicism is a little older than Ralph Lauren's Polo look, but not much. The White House had been standing for half a century before they held a competition to design the Houses of Parliament—which during the Victorian period served the similar purpose of masking the stresses of an anxious age behind symbols of stability and order. Like the innocent tourist who mistakes Gothic Revival buildings for medieval monuments, Charles seems unaware that his view of the "true, ancient art" is a 19th-century fiction.

Charles is right to object when his critics accuse him of wanting to create a Disneyland. Compared with the global scale of Victoria's historical re-creations, Disney's theme parks are, well, Mickey Mouse. But, like Disney, 19th-century historicism could embody progressive ideas as well as nostalgia for a fictional past. When Victorian narrative painters employed Gothic motifs—depicting Queen Victoria, for instance, as a figure from Arthurian legend—the glorification of monarchy was often incidental; the real subject was Britain's heroic resistance to feudal oppression. These paintings proclaimed that the true tradition of England is social progress. The Greek Revival, similarly, sought an affinity between modern democracy and its ancient antecedent to prop up democracy's advance. And despite the vigor with which the War of the Styles was waged, the two architectural vocabularies could even be combined—as in the Houses of Parliament, for which a classical plan, denoting democracy, was clothed in Gothic ornament, denoting the British development of representative government.

But it was one thing to evoke the medieval world in narrative painting, and another to consign the British population to an antiquarian architect's faithful reconstruction of the medieval world. Often these reconstructions appealed less to progressive instincts than to a craving for traditional authority to step in and clean up the mess that progress had made. This was the case with Pugin's *Contrasts*, a book whose 1841 edition used graphic images to juxtapose the harmony of medieval times and the chaos of the industrial city. (Charles's book forces a similarly odious comparison by setting a photograph of modern London

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atop a painting by Canaletto.)

Every fan of *Upstairs, Downstairs* (itself, of course, a historical re-creation) knows how the desire to smooth over the bumps of modern life with the illusion of harmony and grace served to perpetuate social privilege. Virginia Woolf, writing at the height of the Edwardian age, satirized in *Mrs. Dalloway* the "grand deception practiced by hostesses in Mayfair from one-thirty to two, when, with a wave of the hand, the traffic [of aproned, white-capped maids] ceases, and there arises instead this profound illusion in the first place about the food—how it is not paid for; and then that the table spreads itself voluntarily with glass and silver." Windsorism is less a style than a bid to revive this kind of "grand deception." For all his appeal to populism, Charles's vision denies the connection between the architecture he values and the submerged social structure that kept it running smoothly. He wants to extend the Edwardian hostess's sleight of hand from the dining room to the street of every town and village in Great Britain.

The point of Modernism was, in fact, to make such connections visible, to exhibit as physical structure a social framework in which value was derived from work. That is partly why Modern buildings took their cues from factories: not from some perverse inhuman whim, but to embody what Charles terms "hierarchy." Architects hoped to impress upon our consciousness that work was the basis of wealth, the connecting fiber of society. Perhaps it's not surprising that this meaning has escaped the author of a book whose dust jacket declares that "all royalties will be donated to the Prince of Wales' Charities." When he looks out at the London skyline, he must see nothing but lèse-majesté: all these ugly, boring boxes that blot out his view of St. Paul's. He is unable to see, or to accept, the idealism of an architecture that elevated workers from the squalor that Canaletto found so picturesque to the eminence enjoyed by the princes of church and state. He's not alone in this blindness; it is a mark of our unexamined elitism when we look out at this cityscape and feel disgust instead of at least a measure of pride.

Modern architecture is not above criticism, and architects themselves are not above offering it. Many modern buildings are eyesores. Worse, the functional vocabulary long since ceased to convey the social message it held half a century ago. In the past 25 years, architects as diverse in their sensibilities as Aldo Rossi, Robert Venturi, and James Stirling have adopted our relationship to the past as an architectural subject; they recognize that at the end of the 20th century our view of the past—and the future—differs from the view that prevailed at the century's beginning. But Charles refuses to accept these changes, because he hates the idea that architecture can change. "Don't be confused by post-modernism," he warns his readers, "and all the other 'isms' that clever architecture critics and commentators conjure up in order to lull us into a false sense of security!" Never mind that false security is what his life is made of. Charles doesn't want history, he wants an escape from history. He's like someone—he *is* someone—who has grown up in the midst of an elaborate stage set, and he's furious that there's a tear in the backdrop, that you can see the pulleys, that the stagehands have walked off the job.

And his vision of beauty is uglier than Pugin's, because it blots out issues of race as well as class. When Charles recalls the English to their heritage, he speaks, whether he knows it or not, for all who resent the invasion of former colonials. This time around, the white man's burden isn't religion, it's classicism. Charles has nice things to say about contemporary Islamic architects who use traditional forms, but he uses this praise as an analogy to drive his countrymen back to their Gothic and Classical roots. Since he doesn't believe in "the spirit of an age," he has no idea that at this moment the issue of cultural difference is critical. He can't see that to describe classicism as a language "universally understood" is to cast out the cultures that won't share that language. But then, to many Englishmen, India and China are still just something you pick before adding cream or sugar.

Charles is careful to exempt developers from his attacks. If he went after the building trades, or anyone else with real economic clout, there would be no more riding around in open carriages. Instead, he believes it was "the architectural establishment, or a powerful group within it, which made the running in the '50s and '60s. It was they who set the cultural agenda. . . . It was the 'great architects' of this period who convinced everyone that the world would be safe in their hands." Charles is not far wrong in these accusations. Yet I suspect he hates architects not because they are powerful, but because, like himself, they lack political power. Like princes, architects deal in symbols. And it can't be easy to be a cultural symbol for a culture in whose creativity you play no part; a culture that, for 200 years, has run counter to the belief that birth should confer privileges—and moreover one that, until

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the 20th century, rarely thought twice about enlisting architecture to provide a symbolic representation of royal power. At one time, after all, cities were simply extensions of royal households.

It's understandable that Charles should want to do something more useful than cut ribbons and produce an heir; that, I assume, is why he has embarked with painful sincerity on this career of architecture critic. But all the opinion polls in the world can't change the fact that, except by accident of birth, and by grace of the media's appetite for mediocrity in all forms and especially in high places, he would not be in the position to occupy our attention with his poor ideas. Is Charles a joke, then, not worth taking seriously? Not unless you think that architecture is a joke. They're laughing much these days in England, where this idiotic crusade has caused architects to lose work and creativity to lose stature.

And yet Charles has opened up a set of questions that can be useful in helping us to recall Modern architecture's aims and the sources of its discontent. How do you judge whether a building is good or bad? Who are the clients for public buildings, and what is the public's stake in privately owned buildings that help to define a cityscape?

The issue of evaluation also arose in the 19th century, as architects found themselves buffeted by the competing claims of industrialization, middle-class prosperity, historical tradition, political reform, and Romantic rebellion. In his brilliant book *Victorian Architecture in England*, John Summerson writes that Victorian architecture confronts us with a "huge distortion of social and artistic relationships." Ordinarily, Summerson notes, "we are accustomed to begin evaluating the contents of a period of architecture on the assumption that in relation to the society which built it, it was right. Where the Victorians are concerned it would be much safer to begin, at least, on the assumption that it was wrong." This is not simply the retroactive appraisal of a Modern ideologue. As the book documents, "Early and mid-Victorian architecture was, in its own time and in the eye of its best-informed critics, horribly unsuccessful."

The problem was not merely the dichotomy between architecture and engineering, or the conflict between the 19th century's desire for an architecture "of its time" and its belief that it could locate one through a synthesis of the historical styles, or the lack of historical precedent for the new building types and social configurations produced by the 19th century. Victorian architecture was "wrong" in large part because there was no one to say that it was right. Historical forms—"pre-approved," as they say on today's credit card applications—simply filled up the vacuum left when architecture, like government, was no longer subject to the claims of a central authority. To go back to the Victorian world for anything more than a superficial whiff of the picturesque, then, is to find not a reliable model for guidance, but a muddle of confusion, anxiety, failure, and doubt. Those great hulks of masonry that look so solid, so confident, turn out to be quivering masses of jelly.

Even Victorian painters came to recognize the failure of the historicist enterprise. "But what did I know about Arabella Stewart and James I," confessed G. A. Storey in 1899, after a lifetime of painting them, "except what Miss Lucy Aiken had told me in her two volumes, and what I could pick up from prints of the period? I got up my accessories just as a stage manager would do for a new piece, borrowed costumes . . ." For Storey, the revelation came with a hard look at a painting by Velázquez, in which faces, costumes, and attitudes belonged "so completely to [their] own day, even as the hand that wrought it, that I felt I had a true page of history before me, and not a theatrical makeup of a scene dimly realized in the pages of some book written many years after the event."

The consensus achieved by the Modern Movement in the years after 1923 did not resolve the crisis of evaluation. It proposed that evaluation would have to start from scratch. The Modern tabula rasa cleared a metaphorical space to visualize what a public space might look like. If Modern architects rejected the past, it was partly because the past only clouded the vision of this new entity. All those charming squares, handsome piazzas, stately boulevards merely contained the public; they offered no guidance in how best to represent it. The Modern consensus proposed that in a democratic culture responsibility for architecture should begin with architects. Anyone can become one, even a prince.

This responsibility did not exempt architects from criticism. Quite the contrary, it removed the protection of tradition that Victorian architects had tried to hide behind. The postwar decades, which Charles describes as the origin of the Modern architect's assault on society, in fact brought forth an escalating series of criticisms of architecture, from outside and inside the profession, which made it clear that architects had no more right than monarchs to impose their will on others; that the architect's social contract was provisional and subject to a constant renegotiation of its terms. Housing, land use, building density, transportation, and historical preservation were all inscribed on the slate in these decades as the focus of critical debate to "set the agenda" for architecture and urban design.

Of these, preservation has probably been the most problematic aesthetically, because it continued to raise the question of architectural evaluation. Why should this building rather than that building be declared a landmark? What makes it so great? Preservationists have been no better equipped than the Victorians to set forth rules. In place of aesthetics, they have offered anthropology, the claim that a particular building is "representative of its time." Even so, the most astute critics of these years—Summerson, Mumford, Huxtable—found it not only possible but necessary to ad-

After Reading Wang Wei, I Go Outside to the Full Moon

Back here, old snow like lace cakes,
Candescent and brittle now and then through the tall grass.
Remorse, remorse, the dark drones.

The body's the affliction,
No resting place in the black pews of the winter trees,
No resting place in the clouds.

Mercy upon us, old man,
You in the China dust, I this side of my past life,
Salt in the light of heaven.

Isolate landscape. World's grip.
The absolute, as small as a poker chip, moves off,
Bright moon shining between pines.

CHARLES WRIGHT

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vance the cause of Modern architecture *and* to breathe life into the preservation movement. The two goals were complementary ways of staking the public's claim to public space.

The point is that for well over a century the history of architecture has been inseparable from the history of criticism. A good deal of 20th-century architecture is about criticism: how architects, often drawn to architecture to exercise their critical faculties through the medium of buildings, reset the agenda of competing cultural pressures. The contemporary city is the physical record of renegotiations of the architect's social contract—between economic, political, aesthetic, and social criteria; and these renegotiations have been carried out in public ever since the Enlightenment began to expand the definition of architecture from sacred and state monuments to embrace the community at large.

The lesson that many of today's most gifted architects have drawn from the past is not success, but failure: that to operate in this expanded field is to build things people won't like. The fragmented forms of Post-Modernism and deconstruction, the Venturian theory that buildings should accommodate, not oppose, their surroundings—all arise from the awareness that architecture unfolds in an arena where criticism reigns. Of course architects can be arrogant. The profession, like all professions, can easily sink into complacent habits of thought. (Even by 1941, Summerson stated that the functionalist canon was old hat.) The combination of stagnant architectural ideas and hyperactive real estate development can be lethal. These tendencies all require sustained criticism—from professionals as well as laymen—to keep architecture alive. And it also takes criticism to make a place for work that may not be popularly pleasing, to point out that to exalt popularity as a criterion is to condemn architecture to the level occupied in literature by Charles's in-law, Barbara Cartland. Whether innovation is inevitably elitist, whether the borders of creativity should be more tightly circumscribed in architecture than they are, say, in fiction, are questions that neither a popular vote nor history can finally settle. It is up to criticism to keep them open.

To the extent that Charles's campaign prods complacency within the profession, that he reminds us unwittingly that the staid architecture of the Victorian era was in fact the swirl of controversy from which Modernism arose, that he reminds us also of the honor of the architect's failures, he is nurturing one of the hardiest roots of Modern architecture itself. To the quite considerable extent that he mistakes the 19th century's confusion as the embodiment of classic and timeless values, however, he is merely delivering a vital tradition into the hands of a dead one. •

The Good Housekeeper

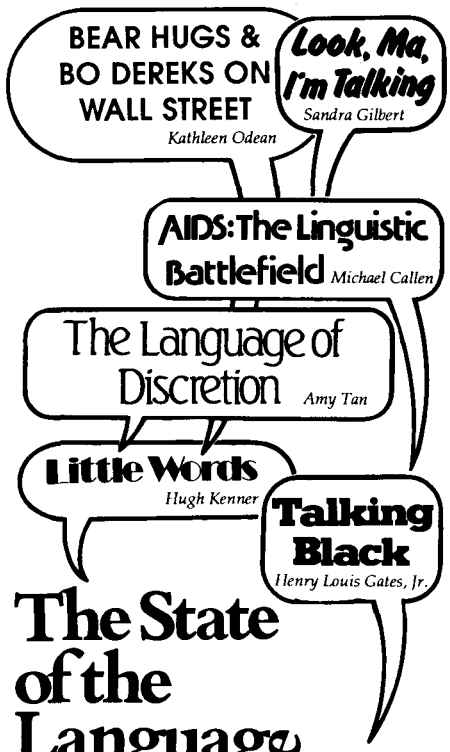
BY DAVID CANNADINE

The Iron Lady: A Biography of Margaret Thatcher by Hugo Young

(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 570 pp., $25)

During the last 150 years, Britain has been ruled by only four prime ministers who might properly be described as authentic outsiders. The first was Benjamin Disraeli, an indebted novelist and Jewish adventurer, with unconventional tastes in clothes, who nevertheless became leader of the Conservative Party, was prime minister in 1868 and again from 1874 to 1880, and finished his life as Earl of Beaconsfield and as a Buckinghamshire country gentleman. The second was David Lloyd George, a small-town, petit bourgeois Welsh attorney, who supported the Afrikaners against the British at the time of the Boer War, hated the traditional governing classes in all their snobbish guises, and yet became prime minister in 1916, when he led a grateful nation to victory in the First World War. The third was James Ramsay MacDonald, an illegitimate Scotsman born in humble circumstances, who (like Disraeli and Lloyd George) went neither to public school nor to university, threw in his lot with the fledgling Labour Party at a time when its prospects of power seemed remote, was prime minister in 1924 and from 1929 to 1935, and ended his career despised and rejected by most of his erstwhile supporters.

The fourth of these atypical interlop-



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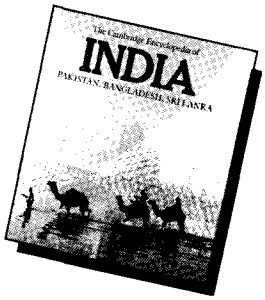

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ers into the restricted world of Westminster and Whitehall is Margaret Hilda Thatcher, who has led the Conservative Party since February 1975, and has been prime minister of Britain since May 1979. Unlike the other three, Thatcher's name alone is enough to explain why she is in one significant respect the most distant and disqualified outsider of them all. It is true that she is sprung from the petite bourgeoisie yet dominates a party traditionally renowned for its aristocratic pretensions and enjoyment of inherited wealth. It is also a fact that she studied chemistry at Oxford University, when most aspiring prime ministers read history or the classics. And it cannot be denied that her Cabinet experience was very limited before she became party leader: a mere four unremarkable years as minister of education in Edward Heath's ill-fated administration. But all this pales into insignificance beside the simple and sensational fact of her gender. She is a woman leading a party that is notoriously male chauvinist in its social attitudes; a woman governing a nation that has never been in the forefront of the struggle for female emancipation; a woman who has even surpassed her own quite limited expectations of what, in her lifetime, someone of her gender might realistically hope to achieve in British politics.

Still, for all her unprecedented outsiderness, Thatcher has time and again beaten the insiders at their own game. Indeed, her triumphs have been so complete and so continuous that they are unrivaled in British history since the passing of the Great Reform Act in 1832. Ten unbroken years in power, and three consecutive victories at general elections, put her far ahead of such textbook titans as Peel, Palmerston, Gladstone, Salisbury, Asquith, and Churchill. Not until we reach back to the pale and shadowy figure of Lord Liverpool, who was prime minister from 1812 to 1827, do we find her equal. But he was the last survivor of the undemocratic and corrupt world of 18th-century politics, when the electorate formed less than five percent of the total population, and when governments were made and unmade in Parliament, not by the voters.

Nor is this the full measure of Thatcher's political dominance. She has brought her country military triumph, unknown since the Second World War. She has survived a carefully plotted assassination attempt. She has been likened to Winston Churchill for her invincible courage. And she has given her name to a political style and a political philosophy, a distinction she shares with no other 20th-century British politician.

Hugo Young's detailed, compulsive, and rightly acclaimed biography was published in Britain at the time of Thatcher's tenth anniversary as prime minister. As anybody knows who has tried his hand at it, contemporary history is a notoriously difficult genre to get right. How is it possible to be wise after the event when the events are still taking place, when the participants are very much alive, when the archives are closed, when problems have not yet come clearly into focus? And to write contemporary biography, of an active and highly controversial political figure, is even more difficult. It is very hard to avoid the pitfalls of polemic, of excessive criticism or sycophantic praise. There are things that cannot be known, and because of England's law of libel, there are things that cannot be said. And in Thatcher's case, the fact that she is still in power means that this interim biography is not even a complete account of her official life. The magnitude of her achievement means that she is already part of history; but it will be the second decade of the 21st century before we can hope to get her full measure as a historical personality.

Yet Young has produced an outstanding book that brilliantly transcends the ephemeralities of instant journalism. It will remain required reading for as long as Thatcher continues to fascinate contemporaries and intrigue posterity, which means for a very long time indeed. Although Young is a journalist with left of center opinions (he writes regularly for the *Guardian* in London), he is neither grinding axes nor paying off scores. He is clearly unsympathetic to many of the things that Thatcher stands for, but he is fascinated by her personality, and well aware that someone who has been in power for so long must be taken seriously, not out of politeness, but because the record will permit no other treatment. He has read almost everything that has been written about her; he has talked extensively to the politicians, civil servants, and other advisers who have worked closely with her at all stages of her career; and he sets her life in as broad a historical perspective as contemporary circumstances allow. The result is a rivetingly readable account of what Disraeli once called "the vicissitudes of politics," by comparison with which even the novels of Jeffrey Archer seem unconvincingly lackluster.

The essential details of Thatcher's pre-prime ministerial life are well known. She was born in 1925 in

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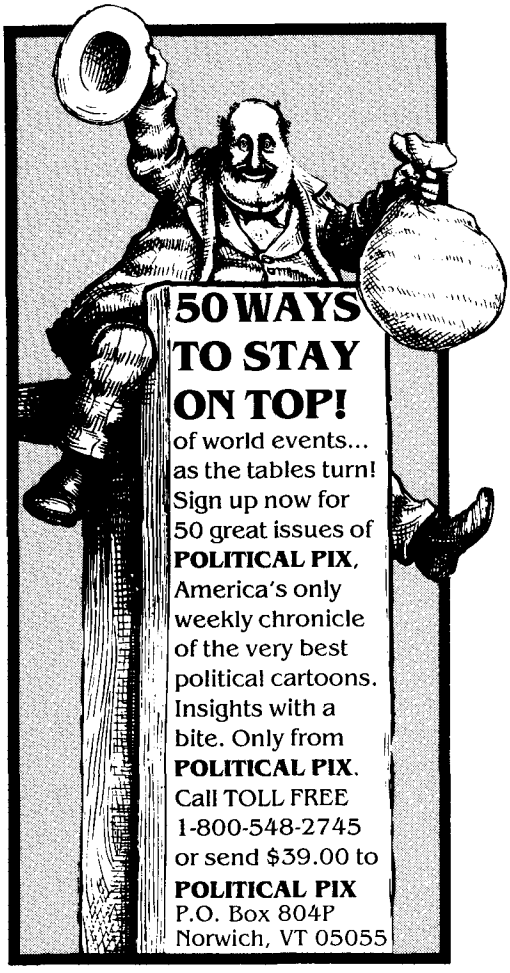
Grantham, a small and unfashionable town in the north of England, where her father owned a local grocery store, taught his daughter the Victorian virtues of thrift, self-help, hard work, ambition, and independence, and played a prominent part in municipal affairs. Inspired by his example, the young Margaret made her way to Oxford University, where she studied chemistry and became president of the Conservative Association. She married Dennis Thatcher in 1951, produced twins, qualified as a lawyer two years later, and was elected Tory MP for Finchley in 1959.

She held junior office under Harold Macmillan and Sir Alec Douglas-Home between 1961 and 1963, and became minister of education under Heath in 1970. But she soon came to abhor Heath's infirmity of purpose, and his irresponsible belief in big-spending government. When he led the Tory Party to two humiliating defeats in 1974, she was the only candidate with the determination to challenge him. Having conquered the Conservatives with her new brand of free market "conviction politics," it was only a matter of time before she conquered the country as well, and in 1979 she won the general election with a sure majority of 43 seats.

But while the facts cannot be contested, it is clear to Young that the Thatcherite interpretation of them is not always reliable. Her family home in Grantham was less deprived than she is wont to admit. Her father's belief in big-spending local government is something she has conveniently forgotten. From the late 1940s to the mid-1970s, she made little impact on the nation at large, and she shared the prevailing Tory commitment to the welfare state and cooperation with the trade unions. As minister of education, she played very little part in the overall formulation of government policy, was herself in charge of a big-spending department, and was far less repressed in office than she has claimed. Her subsequent conversion to the virtues of the free market owed more to the example of Sir Keith Joseph than to her own very limited efforts at political philosophy. When the Conservatives elected her as leader in 1975, it was not so much because she was a right-wing ideologue, but because she was so obviously not Edward Heath. And her victory in 1979 was more a protest against the Labour Government and the crippling strikes of the previous winter than it was a positive endorsement of her or her policies. She may already have had the courage of her convictions, but as her party manifesto showed, it was not yet clear what those convictions were.

Not surprisingly, then, her first term in government began inauspiciously, and with every prospect that it would be her last. Young argues convincingly that she was genuinely unsure of herself when she began the job of prime minister: she knew little about foreign affairs, was regarded as a jarring and untried extremist by many in her own party, and was surrounded by a Cabinet full of Heathite Tories, men like Jim Prior, Ian Gilmour, Christopher Soames, and Lord Carrington, who did not share her belief in the free market. Since she was committed to cutting taxes, to balancing the budget, to reducing public spending, and thus to raising interest rates, the initial effect of the government's fiscal policies was to depress still further an economy already in the powerful grip of stagflation. By 1981 industrial production had fallen, and unemployment risen, to levels reminiscent of the worst years of the interwar depression, yet inflation soared to 20 percent. There were riots in Toxteth and Brixton, several ministers wondered whether the country—or the Tory Party—could possibly survive such unprecedented strain on the social fabric, and by December 1981 the opinion polls reported that Thatcher was the most unpopular prime minister since such records had been kept.

Then, in the spring of 1982, came the Falklands War, the successful outcome of which transformed Thatcher's political position, not just in Britain but throughout the world. Yet as Young points out, it was in many ways a close run thing, not just because the government would have been destroyed if the military gamble had failed, but also because Thatcher's record was neither as clean nor as honorable as she liked to suppose. The Argentineans only invaded in the first place, ironically, because Britain's naval presence in the South Atlantic had been weakened as a result of cuts in the defense budget on which the prime minister herself had insisted. The two ministers most closely concerned with handling the diplomatic and military aspects of the crisis—Francis Pym at the Foreign Office and Defense Secretary John Nott—were both men whom she disliked, distrusted, and later dismissed. And it seems clear that there was a systematic cover-up of the controversial sinking of the Argentine cruiser *General Belgrano*. But all this was of little account in the euphoria of a military victory that atoned for the failures at home, established Thatcher as a conquering



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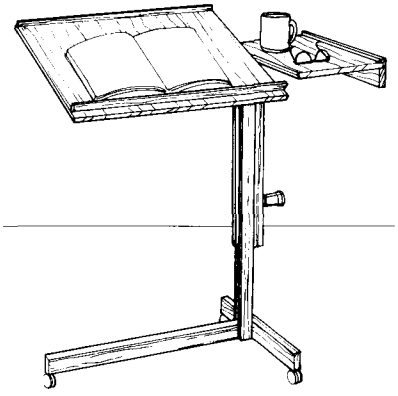

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heroine in the eyes of Britain and of the world, and brought her, in June 1983, a landslide victory.

She took the opportunity to create a Cabinet much more to her liking, by dismissing most of the remaining Tory dissidents, and by promoting protégés such as Nigel Lawson and Leon Brittan; but her second administration was even less purposeful than her first. In the immediate aftermath of victory, Cecil Parkinson was forced to resign because of his relationship with Sara Keays, his former secretary, and the American "invasion" of Grenada—which was still a member of the British Commonwealth—was an embarrassment and a humiliation.

The administration's legislative record was unimpressive, the decision to ban trade unions at the Government Communications Headquarters at Cheltenham was exceptionally controversial, and the sustained attempt to ban the publication of Peter Wright's *Spycatcher* was, by turns, vindictive, ludicrous, pathetic—and totally unsuccessful. In early 1986 the affairs of a bankrupt helicopter company named Westland nearly caused the Cabinet to disintegrate. Two senior ministers were forced to resign, and for a brief moment the prime minister herself feared for her future. Later that year the American bombing of Libya from U.S. Air Force bases in Britain was extraordinarily unpopular, and it was widely rumored that the queen was worried by Thatcher's "uncaring" image, and by her contempt for most Commonwealth leaders. By the end of 1986 many Tories believed the government would lose the next election, and that a hung Parliament would be the most likely outcome.

Once again, however, Thatcher confounded her critics. The coal miners' strike, which began in March 1984, was exceptionally bitter and protracted, and the government's victory was far less unequivocal than it had been over the Argentineans. But to a nation long since fed up with industrial action and trade union militancy, it was a timely triumph. For the Conservatives, in particular, it finally avenged the humiliating defeat of Heath at the hands of the miners in 1974. The privatization of British Telecom, British Airways, and British Gas was an outstanding success; it created a new breed of small-scale shareholders, and coincided with a sustained stock exchange boom. The burgeoning revenue from North Sea oil made possible a succession of hitherto unthinkable tax cuts, inflation was brought under control, and the fact that unemployment remained high somehow ceased to matter. Meanwhile the prime minister cut a positively regal figure on the world stage, not only as the close friend of Ronald Reagan, but also as the first Western leader to take Mikhail Gorbachev seriously. Indeed, her triumphant visit to Moscow in March 1987 was effectively the start of her next election campaign, and three months later she duly won another resounding victory at the polls, which gave her the still unshakable parliamentary majority she enjoys today.

How far is this extraordinary success to be explained—as Thatcher herself would have us believe—in essentially personal terms? Quite rightly, Young has no doubt that she has been the beneficiary of much deeper historical forces, of which she herself is not always fully aware. The recession of the late 1970s and early 1980s was clearly a global phenomenon, which led to a widespread turn to the right, not just in Britain, but also in the United States, West Germany, Canada, Denmark, Norway, and elsewhere. In all these countries, the desire to cut public spending, to balance the budget, and to allow market forces free play has become the stated (if not always realized) objective of government policy.

For most of her premiership, moreover, Thatcher has enjoyed the wholly adventitious blessing of a divided opposition. The Labour Party has abandoned itself to internecine quarrels, and in Michael Foot and Neil Kinnock it has produced two leaders who are incapable of bettering her in the House of Commons, and are generally regarded as lightweight windbags. And the creation of the Social Democratic Party in January 1981 merely guaranteed that at the next two general elections the opposition vote would be fatally split.

But it is not just that Thatcher has frequently benefited from forces beyond her control, it is also that she has achieved much less than her self-congratulatory rhetoric might lead us to suppose. In the nation at large, there is no recognizable pro-Thatcher majority. In the general election of 1987, only 32 percent of the electorate voted for her; public opinion as a whole remains unshakably wedded to the welfare state and collectivist government; and although she herself is admired, feared, and respected, she is certainly not widely loved. On the contrary, she is that extraordinary paradox, a populist who is not popular.

At the same time, the "economic miracle" over which she claims to have presided looks much less robust on closer inspection. The improvement in output since 1981 has only just canceled out the catastrophic fall in production during the first two years of her administration. The decline in inflation owed much to the worldwide fall in commodity prices during the early 1980s; only the windfall gains from the revenue of North Sea oil have made widespread tax cuts possible. And the overall rate of economic growth has been no greater than in the period 1968-73, years viewed by Thatcherite devotees as the apogee of collectivist mismanagement.

Nor are Thatcher's claims to have rolled back the British state at home entirely convincing. As a percentage of GNP, government spending has not been reduced at all during her decade of dominance. The powers and funds of local authorities have been much eroded, while central government has become more intrusive than ever. She may have won back the Falklands in the short term, but in the long term their return to Argentina seems inevitable. In the case of Hong Kong, she has not even attempted to stem the tide of history. Despite her close friendship with Reagan, and her unassailable popularity in America, the old "special relationship" with the United States was not quite re-established. As the Falklands War emphatically demonstrated, Britain can act as a military power only on the sufferance of the White House, and as America's attention is increasingly drawn to the Pacific rim, the old trans-Atlantic ties are bound to loosen. And notwithstanding her loathing of the Common Market and her general dislike of Europeans, it seems clear that the forces of integration must draw Britain ever closer to the Continent in the years ahead. For all her often expressed desire to halt Britain's decline as a great power, she has done little to avert it.

There is one final charge that Young levels against Thatcher, which concerns her very mode of governing. She dominates her so-called ministerial colleagues to a degree that is both unprecedented and unhealthy. In Cabinet meetings, she harangues and bullies, and seems quite impervious to rational argument. She has sacked more ministers than any previous premier (and her record tenure in office does not account for the record list of victims). She has created protégés, such as John Biffen and Leon Brittan, and then easily cast them aside. She has used the most devious means to undermine ministers with whose policies she disagrees, such as Jim Prior over trade union reform and Michael Heseltine over the Westland affair. Instead of taking responsibility for her actions and her mistakes, she has thrust

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forward civil servants—especially the previous Cabinet secretary, Sir Robert Armstrong—to take the blame and the flak on her behalf.

Despite her claim to be honest, truthful, and straightforward, her record over the miners' strike, the *Belgrano* sinking, and the Westland debacle is far from spotless. In the conduct of foreign affairs, she is often abrasive and offensive to a quite extraordinary degree, and she repeatedly sacrifices long-term objectives for short-term gains. Above all, she remains congenitally incapable of taking in any view but her own, and regards those who disagree with her as traitors, quislings, and Marxists.

Still, as Young himself recognizes, this lengthy catalog of caveats and complaints in no sense undermines the extraordinary position that Thatcher has created for herself in British public life. For what she has managed to do—partly by a prodigious capacity for hard work, partly by sheer force of personality, partly by astonishing good fortune, partly by the cumulative effect of so many years in power—is to capture and to keep the political initiative in a way that is quite without precedent in modern British history.

She has outlasted two American Presidents, three Soviet leaders, and four French prime ministers. She has seen off Harold Wilson, James Callaghan, and Michael Foot, to say nothing of her enemies in the Tory Party itself. She has remade both the Cabinet and the Civil Service in her own image. She has broken the power of the trade unions, and put the BBC, the universities, and the Church of England on the defensive. She has halted, and reversed, the trend toward the increased nationalization of industry. She has elevated the private virtues of good housekeeping into the public canons of government policy. She is the visible embodiment of petit bourgeois triumphalism. Although the long-term perspective of history will undoubtedly diminish her stature, there can be no contesting the degree to which Thatcher's contemporaries believe that she has dominated her own times.

But there remains one question, to which even Young cannot provide a fully satisfactory answer. Is Thatcher's gender important? If so, how? One view is that she is, in the end, an honorary man. Tough, combative, determined, and aggressive, she conspicuously displays many masculine qualities, and has deliberately taken lessons to lower the pitch of her voice. Another is that she may be a woman, but is essentially de-eroticized: in one guise an Amazonian warrior, a latter-day Boudicca, leading her troops into battle; or alternatively a sort of national nanny, always saying no to the slightest hint of waywardness or self-indulgence. But there is clearly more to Thatcher's femininity than that. She has obviously benefited from residual male chauvinist chivalry, which means that in the Cabinet and in the Commons her opponents do not stand up to her as they would to other men. She is much concerned with what she wears, and apparently displays a housewifely concern for her own immediate entourage. She has a weakness for well-groomed, middle-aged men with a touch of the buccaneer about them, like Cecil Parkinson. And it is also clear that many politicians and international statesmen find her very attractive indeed. Perhaps President Mitterrand summed her up best when he remarked that she had the eyes of Caligula and the mouth of Marilyn Monroe. (It is not known, incidentally, by which he was more captivated.)

If, as Harold Wilson once averred, a week is a long time in British politics, then Margaret Thatcher's uninterrupted years in Downing Street are more than just a decade; they border on an eternity that shows no signs of coming to an end. Like its predecessors, her third administration has run into the midterm doldrums. Her recent Cabinet reshuffle last summer was characteristically brutal, but uncharacteristically maladroit. The new poll tax has enraged many of her supporters, as well as her by now traditional opponents. The balance of payments deficit seems out of control, inflation is once more on the increase, while Nigel Lawson's resignation as chancellor of the Exchequer has once again drawn attention to her increasingly dictatorial method of government. And with the Social Democrats in what may well be terminal disarray, it may no longer be possible for her to count on the luxury of a divided opposition vote.

And yet, if precedent is any guide, none of this will prevent Thatcher from winning the next election, nor, as she herself once put it, from "going on and on and on and on." It is just possible to imagine her in serene old age and venerable retirement, apotheosized as the Countess of Grantham or the Duchess of Dulwich. But barring accidents, this unwanted transformation will not happen until she decides that it should. For, as Hugo Young frequently reminds us, Margaret Thatcher almost always gets her way.

DAVID CANNADINE teaches history at Columbia University. His *The Pleasures of the Past* has just been published by W. W. Norton.

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Rebels and Dreamers

BY CHRISTOPHER HOPE

Ìsarà: A Voyage Around "Essay" by Wole Soyinka

(Random House, 262 pp., $18.95)

When the Nigerian writer Wole Soyinka was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1986, the decision of the Swedish Academy to honor an African writer led to a controversy in Nigeria, and in other parts of Africa, that has not yet abated. Soyinka was attacked by some who espouse what is known as the "Afrophone" cause; they consider the bestowal of such "European" baubles upon African writers limiting and demeaning at best, and at worst a deliberate attempt imperialistically to undermine the vigor of indigenous African literature. "Afrocentrists," thundered the Nigerian critic Chinweizu at a recent literary gathering, "see the Nobel Prize as a local European prize, whose award to any African is an imperialist act of hegemony . . . a high point of a continuing Western effort to manipulate African culture in a self-stultifying direction that would hold it subordinate to Western culture." Soyinka's acceptance of the prize was seen by those who take this line as an example of "Europhile" tendencies. The sheer ugliness of these terms is a symptom of this often heated and rather unhelpful debate.

Soyinka is no stranger, however, to the charge. He has shown an ability to turn sharply when attacked, and in an interview in 1983 he took the opportunity to respond to his critics with characteristic pungency. He described them as "neo-Tarzanists," and proceeded to revel in the multiplicity of literary sources, European and African, that infuse his own work. Far from hiding the fact that he dealt in "various complimentaries, or singularities, or contradictions," he confessed to embracing them with unabashed enthusiasm. Nowhere is this more emphatically demonstrated than in his new memoir, *Ìsarà: A Voyage Round "Essay."*

Born in Western Nigeria in 1934, Soyinka studied in England in the 1950s, and his first plays were produced in London. He returned to Nigeria at the time of independence in 1960, and soon established himself as one of the most brilliant of the new generation of African playwrights with works such as *The Lion and the Jewel*, *A Dance of the Forests*, and *The Trials of Brother Jero*. The *Jero* plays in particular are rich comedies of contemporary Nigerian life. With similar savagery, *Madmen and Specialists* took apart the violent absurdities of the Nigerian civil war in the late 1960s, when a new country called Biafra was born, and brutally snuffed out. Soyinka's other plays have looked searchingly at the last days of colonial life in pre-independence Nigeria. In *Opera Wonyosi* he produced a *Beggar's Opera*, African-style; and in an adaptation of *The Bacchae*, he turned this classic of Euripides to African advantage, and to Nigerian discomfort. Its parallels with the bloodletting during and after the Biafran war were unmistakable. Commenting in 1973 on the public executions held on a Lagos beach, Soyinka rubbed in the point: "The war no longer united people in Stoicism; so they're trying to unite them in bestiality and guilt by the titillation of the power-cravings of the meanest citizen."

Although it was as a dramatist that he first made his name, Soyinka's considerable energies have flowed widely. He has been a teacher, a literary critic, and an editor. Besides his attachment to the theater, where he has worked as writer, actor, director, and producer, Soyinka is also a poet, and his first novel, *The Interpreters*, published in 1956, has become an African classic. The novel traces the lives of a group of young Nigerian intellectuals, whose ambitions and ideals sink slowly in a sea of official corruption. In 1981, with the publication of *Aké, The Years of Childhood*, an autobiography of his first 12 years, he proved himself to be a delicate memoirist.

Soyinka's enthusiasm for political engagement, in African affairs generally and in Nigerian politics specifically, has been as vigorous as his passion for complimentarities and contradictions. He has vividly demonstrated his commitment to African independence and to the destruction of the last vestiges of colonialism, particularly in Southern Africa, that "sore toe" of the continent. At one point he took over as editor of *Transition*, when that journal was forced to move from Uganda to Accra (a flight forced upon the magazine by the lethal attentions of Idi Amin). He has also served as secretary general of the Union of Writers of African Peoples. But it has been in Nigeria itself that his political beliefs have landed him in trouble more than once. Though he energetically escapes any kind of tribal grouping, Soyinka has consistently celebrated his Yoruba background. His sense of communal customs, beliefs, and values has shaped his writing.

By the sort of fruitful contradiction that distinguishes his work, he expresses his political views with an irrepressible individuality that has not endeared him to the strongmen who come and go in Nigeria. "Heresiarchs of the System," he calls them in his 1971 play *Madmen and Specialists*, those so corrupted by rank and influence as to believe that "the end shall justify the meanness." Soyinka displays himself primarily as a satirist, instinctively uneasy in the presence of power, splendidly disrespectful of the self-love of those who wield it. He has attacked political corruption in Nigeria with angry exhilaration. In fact, it is difficult to think of a writer who has lacerated his own people so fiercely since Karl Kraus pilloried the Viennese with his own loyal hatred.

It is not surprising that Soyinka ran into trouble. He was first arrested in Nigeria on trumped up charges in 1965. Two years later he was detained again by the Nigerian federal authorities during the civil war, and imprisoned for his sympathies for the short-lived secessionist state of Biafra. He was released in 1969. It swiftly became clear that his commitment to freedom in thought and pluralism in politics had not abated. Quite the contrary; if he had been merely a believer in such things on being thrown into jail, Soyinka declared later, then he came out "a fanatic." Prison did nothing to slow him down. In addition to making a free translation of a Yoruba novel while in detention, he also managed to write three plays; and on his release he published a startlingly explicit account of his imprisonment, *The Man Who Died*. A couple of years later there followed the publication of a major collection of poems, *The Shuttle In The Crypt*, which was marked by his experiences in jail.

In 1972, still uneasy in the political dispensation of the time (Nigeria was to labor under a succession of military dictatorships until 1979), Soyinka left Nigeria for a self-imposed exile in Europe,

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Africa, and the United States, returning only in 1976 when the regime of General Gowan was overthrown. It was the death of his father during those years in exile that prompted this memoir of the old teacher and his friends in a vanished world. Readers of *Aké* will recall the affectionate portrait of his father, Essay: a kindly but razor-eyed pedagogue, formidable when challenged, serene in contemplation and mighty in combat. Ìsarà is also briefly sketched in that earlier memoir. It was his father's "natal home," and always seemed to be located "several steps into the past," a place of concealed delights, of festivals and surprises, a refuge where the young Wole used to spend New Year's with his teacher father, and his irrepressible mother, known as "wild Christian."

The memoir is constructed from fragments Soyinka discovered in an old tin trunk when he returned to Nigeria some years after his father's death. In the trunk he found "a handful of letters, old journals with marked pages and annotations, notebook jottings . . ." It seems, in all conscience, a meager enough record; but from these fragments Soyinka has constructed a defense against the ruin of time. *Ìsarà* is a number of things: a filial portrait of a beloved father sketched with considerable delicacy and gaiety; a re-creation of a colonial period in its final phases during the late 1930s with the outbreak of the Second World War looming ever closer; an exploration of a generation whose aspirations were governed by their European rulers, the British colonialists, but whose longings and leanings were African.

The passion for memory is more marked than it was in *Aké*, which recounts in fairly straightforward autobiographical fashion the story of Soyinka's boyhood. In the new book, a memory is not simply an involuntary spasm, a way back into the past by which lost time may be reclaimed; it is also a way of staking a claim on the landscape, and a weapon to be wielded against those to whom it never occurred that there was anything to remember. Meditative, somewhat slow in getting started, but taking on a determination not only to recall but to reinvent the town of Ìsarà and people it with characters who might have lived there, this semi-fictional portrait is painted with grace and humor.

Still, within the amiable narrative Soyinka cannot disguise a steady, often profound anger at the unequal struggle of his father's generation against the British. They, the colonizers, were too proud of their ignorance to respond to an Africa that, before they came, had belonged only to itself; even the well-meaning white officials were unable to sense their imminent redundancy. For their part, the inhabitants of Ìsarà are gently satirized; they are full of entrepreneurial dreams, half-baked projects, and the excitable frustrations of those who know, to their regret, that the "real" world exists somewhere else, in London or New York or Berlin. They are respectful, hard-pressed, above all too well-schooled by their European masters to believe in their own, wholly African independence. Yet, as Soyinka shows, it was the modest heroism of his father's generation that made such independence inevitable.

The schizophrenia of a generation of the 1930s caught between Europe and Africa proved very fruitful. It was in many ways an admirable condition, and is chronicled by Soyinka with burning affection. *Ìsarà* is at once the most relaxed and the most profound of his meditations on the past. His father and his circle of friends and their families each constitute a particular port of memory's call. Because a number of them were educated at Saint Simeon's Seminary in Ilesa, they came to be known as the ex-Ilés; friends who survived their missionary education and who revisit their hometown, "returned to sender," from Lagos and the wider world beyond, for reasons of piety or celebration, for funerals, feasts, and anniversaries. There is Soditan Akinyode, the headteacher; Sipe Efuape, sometime tax inspector and would-be entrepreneur, alias the Resolute Rooster; Osibo, the pharmacist, schooled in the white man's medicine and a fierce opponent of traditional herbalists; and Saaki Akinsanya, militant trade unionist, who is to become, though he does not know it, the future king of Ìsarà.

The degree to which the outside world—with its illustrated brochures of consumer goods, its motor cars and bank bonds, its correspondence schools, depressions, and prodigious wars—dominated and tantalized the people of Ìsarà is strikingly illustrated at the very outset. Soditan Akinyode sits in his father's fiber-cane chair admiring the calligraphy of his American pen-friend, one Wade Cudeback. Cudeback writes of touring America in the wide-eyed prose of the guide book; he is thrilled to be out on the

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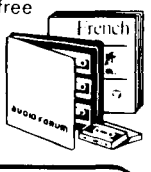

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road and bowling along, careful to illuminate and instruct his distant, and unknown, Nigerian correspondent about the wonders on his odyssey: "four provinces of Canada and six states of the United States, a scintillating three thousand five hundred mile trip in my jalopy."

Inspired by such galloping enthusiasm, Soditan dreams of a similar journey in his own country, but he knows that there will be no "jalopy." A bicycle will have to do. Besides the severely practical problems, there is the enormous difficulty of getting a grip on a country that feels like your own but is firmly in the hands of others. Ìsarà also has its wonders, of course: "the battle-contested grounds of the Yoruba kingdoms," sites of the old Fulani Wars, and the ancient kingdom of Oyo. There is the derivation of the Ìsarà praise name itself, a city never taken in battle, Afotamodi, "they whose city ramparts are raised on ammunition." Exotic and fabulous though such places are, they seem somehow to pale by comparison with Cudeback's confident, authorial grip on the names of his native places: the Plains of Abraham, the Magnetic Hill, and the fabulously named city Ashtabula. What matter if the American Indians named Ashtabula and not the white man? All names in America now belong without question to the new settlers. But in Ìsarà and Ilesa the question of naming and knowing seldom arose among students marched across the land of their ancestors by white teachers who never taught their pupils to use their eyes. It is the fate of such histories, Soditan knows, that place names unlooked at fade and disappear.

> All the time Europe presses more closely. Mussolini threatens Abyssinia; Hitler is rampant in Europe; the Great Depression affects even the most distant countries. Then the first bombs fall in London, and Nigerians are expected to rally to the British cause, even though some of them have difficulty in distinguishing just who the enemy is supposed to be, caught as they are between two evils, the close British occupier and the distant German invader. "What is our stake," Mrs. Esan, the traveler in woven cloth, demands of the teacher Soditan, "in this quarrel between white people?"

The formidable Mrs. Esan comes to call on teacher Soditan. She is a fierce supporter of local crafts and is scathing about the new imported cloth, "the velvet imposter" that affected Lagosians prefer to the indigenous product. The introduction of Mrs. Esan into the highly patterned narrative of *Ìsarà* is typical of Soyinka's method, which is to create a tightly woven surface of vivid and unexpected patterns not unlike the local Etù cloth so beloved by his character. Apparently minor characters become pivotal in reminding us that beneath the seemingly tranquil surface of small-town life in Nigeria in the faraway 1930s, politics was a passionate, even a bitter, force for change. Mrs. Esan's means of demonstrating this are simple, but devastating. She reads her old teacher a letter from a British administrator to a local Nigerian paper:

> You will never find a West African who can invent a big business, such as a steamship line, or a bank, or a railroad. The white man steps in there. The average West African is no more fit to govern his own colonies than the average English member of the Parliament of today is to handle any part or portion of the British Empire. If the African were allowed to try, and we, at the pull of our silly sentimentalists, withdrew the home stiffening, how long would it be before chaos reigned? Five years? One? Six months?

But this is not simply a book about the British in Nigeria, or about racial oppression, or about African independence. Soyinka fastidiously ensures that at no time does it deteriorate into anything expected, conventional, or merely political. *Ìsarà* is an act of filial devotion, a son's informed fiction about a father, ferociously intelligent and quietly heroic. Soditan Akinyode is really just a lightly fictionalized portrait of Soyinka's father. Above all, it is a book about the fabulous link forged, at least in the dreamy head of Soditan, between Ìsarà and the longed-for and distant town of Ashtabula. In reality a less than interesting provincial American town, Ashtabula looms large and magnificent in remote contemplation. And long-vanished Ìsarà grows in the imagination of one who sees it, and is both a kingdom of heroes and marvels—as well as a modest town in the Remo district of Nigeria.

Even the breezily informative letters of Cudeback become a tool in the excavation of the sights and sounds of Ìsarà. In an extraordinary passage, the teacher paints pictures of his home using the American's calligraphy. Since Soditan, despite his dreams of travel, is never to leave home—it will be left to his son to make the voyage around his memories of the old man—he becomes instead the seeing eye of the book, the steady center around which all other characters orbit. Although Cudeback speaks of foreign wonders, his handwriting reminds Soditan of home: "Each exclamation mark was like the housepost of the *ogboni* shrine. . . . Each D was consistently like the cauliflower ear of Osibi, the pharmacist, while the W was just like an *abetiaja* [a Yoruba dress-cap], or the starched bristling headgear of the Reverend Sisters from Oke Padi hospital."

Ìsarà is, then, many things—a fairy tale, a memoir, a moral fable, and a tribute to a generation educated by the white man, schooled in his ways, but already sensing that in Africa his day was almost over. In a final and triumphant chapter these disparate threads are woven together. The new king rides in on his white horse, a regal entry into Ìsarà. Indeed, this final closing section is perhaps the most effective in the book, and illustrates Soyinka's dramatic gifts to great advantage. The august and holy personage of Agunrin Odubona, reputed to be over 100 years old, a man whom nobody has heard speak in ten years, the very soul of Ìsarà, sits in judgment on the competing claimants for the throne. And as they talk, the old man bitterly meditates on the fatal collapse of the Nigerian tribal armies before the British invader who, in infernal alliance with the European church, swept all before him in a series of conquests from 1861, with the annexation of Lagos; and then in a succession of wars that continued into the early years of the 20th century.

Ìsarà is, to use the acrimonious terms of the debate about authenticity in African literature, an uncompromisingly "Afrophone" book. But in its deceptively leisurely fashion it shows a thoroughly African identity, not by focusing on European deficiencies but by measuring, with grace and with civility, the distance between aspirations for independence and the realities that have followed in Nigeria. In the ex-Ilés of Ìsarà Soyinka celebrates his father's generation, which, whatever the vagaries of the colonial milieu, came slowly but surely into its own. The town springs to life speaking in the accents of men and women who, however small their room for maneuver, hedged in as they were by the decent yet monumental obtuseness of their British governors, exemplify the virtues of ambition, fortitude, and patience. The implication, though Soyinka never needs to state it, is that the generation of Ìsarà sets a standard by which succeeding generations in independent Nigeria must be measured, and by which they fall short. Even in repose, Wole Soyinka is a discomforting writer.

CHRISTOPHER HOPE is the author of *White Boy Running*, recently released in paperback (Anchor Books), and *My Chocolate Redeemer* (Heinemann).

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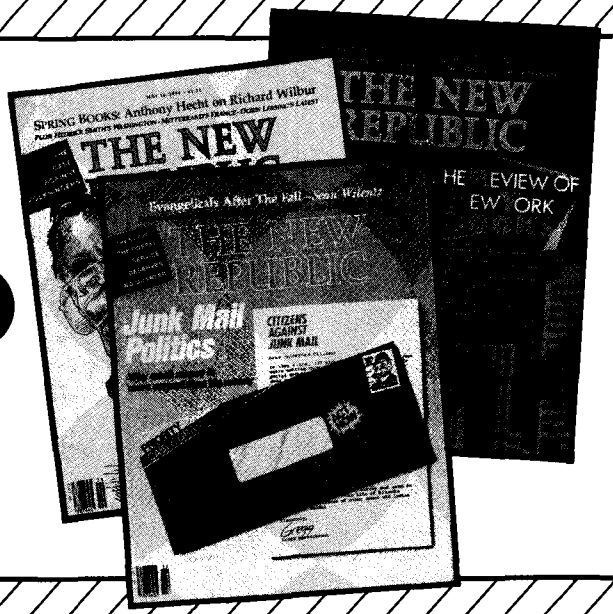

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Return of the Living Dead

BY MAUREEN DOWD

All By Myself: The Unmaking of a Presidential Campaign by Christine M. Black and Thomas Oliphant

(Globe Pequot Press, 343 pp., $19.95)

Sometimes, if the hour is early and the room is dark and the city is strange, I wake up in a panic. Is this the day I will be a pinball in George Bush's motorboat, as he demonically punches through the Maine waves to prove what a man he is? Is this the day I will travel with Gary Hart, in his post-Donna comeback, and listen to Lee Hart loudly chide her husband at the airport for not finding their luggage quickly enough: "Ga-a-a-ry, you're not showing your leadership, Ga-a-a-ry!" Is this the day I will inquire of Michael Dukakis about his idea of fun? (It is. "Black mulch," he snaps, racing ahead with his briefcase. "I spread black mulch on my tomato plants.")

Then I remember that it's 1989, and the panic leaves me. Still, is there anybody in America who wishes to re-live *that* campaign? Surely I am not the only reporter who would rather curl up with a copy of *Swedish Land Use Planning* than with a book—say, Christine M. Black and Thomas Oliphant's new book—that promises to explore in depth the "star-crossed campaign" of the Governor of Massachusetts, to paint what its dust jacket calls "a compelling portrait of a decent yet enigmatic man, with all his strengths and weaknesses."

The title of this dreary book by two *Boston Globe* writers were the first words spoken in Greek by their subject, and they are quite enough to remind you why you don't want to spend one more evening with this man. The authors, who began their work hoping for a President from Brookline, lavish 327 pages on a subject who would not even talk to them after the election. Case studies of losers can make fascinating reading, of course. But Dukakis is no Lear. "Something ingrained and visceral kept him from reaching out to let people know him and kept him from reaching in to offer them a loftier vision of the nation's potential," write Black and Oliphant. They're on to something.

Do we really need, as communism is collapsing around the world and freedom is on the march, to rehearse the argument one more time about the rhetorical and political advantages and disadvantages of "Mike" and "Michael"? The Democratic candidate for the Presidency in 1988 was, after all, the ultimate Hall Monitor. A man who had to borrow his aide's brown suede jacket to look more approachable. A man whose wife had to crisscross the country warming up her husband's image by referring to him as "my passionate partner." A man who celebrated winning the primary in California by sipping a glass of water.

But here we are, on page 268, before the first debate with George Bush, and Dukakis is still resisting the pleas of his advisers to make a case for change in the country. On page 284, before the second and final debate, he is still resisting the pleas of his advisers to be aggressive against his opponent. When Robert Squier, the Democratic consultant who helped prepare Dukakis for the debate, asked other advisers if the candidate knew about some late-breaking surge in the polls that would justify the cautious approach, Tom Donilon replied that, on the contrary, "all the white men in America that are for Dukakis are probably sitting right here at this table."

By the time Dukakis made it to Super Tuesday, Charles Wilson, the Democratic Representative from Texas, was summing up the chances of the man he called "the pacifist Greek dwarf" this way: "No Greek dwarf can carry East Texas." Oliphant and Black provide this analysis of Dukakis's, and the Democrats', failure: "We believe that when the crunch came, Dukakis was overwhelmed." That is the fruit of their reflection. Ted Koppel said it more precisely as the story broke. When Dukakis turned in a barren performance on a critical 90-minute "Nightline" interview at the end of the campaign, Koppel pronounced: "You just don't get it, Governor."

When Theodore H. White began his *Making of the President* series three decades ago, there was a clear need for detailed post-mortems, for a different kind of reporting. Most newspaper stories about politics were cut and dried; political journalism had not yet blossomed to the sort of color that White offered. But nowadays political journalism is expiring of color. Newspapers and magazines fall all over themselves and each other in the cause of character exploration and insider analysis. The insiders, in fact, are becoming one of America's largest minority groups. They are certainly its most enfranchised.

In a valedictory interview with the *New York Times*, James Reston recently observed that when he came to his trade in 1940, women were not wanted in journalism, and neither were people who wrote analysis. But as the telegenic overcame the stenographic, the "he said, she said" side of politics, newspapers, and magazines shifted ground and set out to provide the only thing that television couldn't: context and color. They followed White behind the scenes to report on the candidates' breakfast cereals and late-night soliloquies. The irony was that print, not tape, retained the advantages of cinema verité. With cameras around, there was not a chance of getting inside, not a chance of seeing the pols with their hair down, their feet up, their shoes off—or, for that matter, with their pants off.

Certainly the '88 campaign resoundingly confirmed what White had proposed, that while issues have their place, color is truth. In this political culture, policy counts, but character is all. Sadly, all the colorization in the world couldn't make Dukakis anything more than black and white and gray. And black mulch doesn't play even with Iowa farmers.

The function of campaign books, in short, has been overtaken by events, and by the immediate reporting of events. The books have become redundant. A book like Black and Oliphant's is sorely in need of ontological justification. But a closer look shows that such a book is written not for its readers. It is written for its writers and for its subjects. Its main purpose is not to tell the story, but to brighten the aura of the journalists who tell it. That way, in the next campaign, they'll be even bigger Big Feet, and their sources will be even greater exemplars of political consulting at its finest.

This book is designed to be read mainly by the people who are in it. Well, not read exactly; it is one thing to want to be in a book and another to want to read it. The true audience of men and women for campaign books will be sufficiently satisfied by a scrutiny of the index, and a look at

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the passages about themselves.

It is time to consider the index as a literary genre, as one of the most popular genres in the literature of political journalism. This is certainly the index season in Washington. At a White House press briefing the other day, Marlin Fitzwater, the President's spokesman, was asked if he'd read Nancy Reagan's memoir. "No," he replied, his face lighting up with curiosity. "Have you checked the index? Is my name in it?" At cocktail parties, political junkies compare notes on their index status: number of times mentioned; quality of mentions; number and quality of mentions compared with rivals; and possible reasons for not being mentioned at all.

To review a book like *All By Myself*, to assess its importance for its own community, it is quite enough to review its index. Black and Oliphant's index is a bit conventional in its character development, but it is distinguished by thematic resonance. It is a splendid gauge of who's hot and who's not. Thus the once ubiquitous Patrick Caddell is dismissed in a single reference (62), something about a feud with Robert Shrum.

The index resoundingly confirms all political trends, including the one that television reporters are more important than print reporters. Where TV types were mocked as a lower caste of "dilettante know-nothings" in *The Boys on the Bus*, the classic chronicle by Timothy Crouse of the 1972 campaign (which featured Oliphant), now they dominate the index. And, confirming another trend about political viewing, Bernard Shaw, the anchor of Big Brother CNN, gets the most citations: (289, 290-91, 292, 298-99, 306). By contrast, such print stars as David Broder, R. W. Apple, Paul Taylor, James Perry, Fred Barnes, and David Shribman fail to make the index at all.

The index is also a useful measure of the authors' analysis of their subject. Perhaps because they are from Boston, Black and Oliphant prefer to focus on the Dukakis staff and its inner workings, rather than provide a powerful interpretation of deeper themes. The obscure Tad Devine, for instance, rates eight index references for himself, plus two more under Delegate Selection System. By contrast, the all-important entry for Hubris has only two citations (11, 325). (Why such short shrift for the titillating Bestiality Attack (228)?) The index is also a measure of the media's liberal bias. While Michael Dukakis is given 18 index references, the man who beat him has *no index reference at all*. There is merely a listing for Bush Campaign. While all of Dukakis's relatives, from Euterpe to Olympia, get citations, the only representative of the vast Bush clan is the President's late father, Prescott (294).

The index accurately reflects the irrelevance of issues in this miserable campaign; the Middle East crops up once, as does the Clean Air Bill and the Environment. And it vividly captures the prevalence of personality reporting. Under the Dukakis entry, in the interest of analytic precision, there are these subsets: Gestures During Speeches, (46); Independent Nature of, (5); Learning Style of, (16); Personal-Quality Profile of, (4). And the emotional climax of the index is surely its Ts. You know with melodramatic certainty that the Dukakis campaign is in trouble when you come upon the elongated entry under Theme, Need For (7, 8, 9-10, 76, 79, 87, 155, 157, 179, 185, 196, 264, 296).

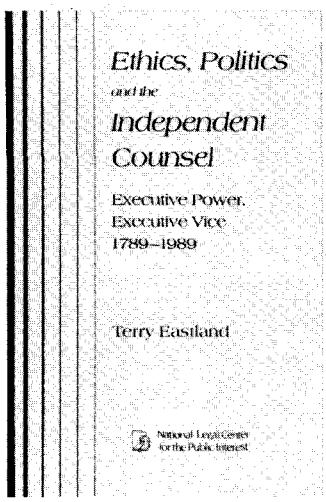
Finally, there is the thorny, slightly post-structuralist matter of the author's own relationship to the index. Thomas Oliphant (60) has been in the game longer than his collaborator. He understands the nuances, and the stakes, of index etiquette. It is important to mention yourself—only once, of course—for the simple reason that everyone will be reading the book back to front. You want to have some credit early on, and not wait until they reach the title page.

Why would a publisher invest time and money in the production of such a book? The study of the index allows us to formulate this puzzle more precisely. Using an Index Profitability Index on *All By Myself*, it is hard not to conclude that the publishers will fail to make money. Consider this equation:

$$\frac{(N - X - 100) \times \$19.95}{2}$$

That is, take the number of names in the index—excluding the names of those who won't consult it, such as Willie Horton (153, 188-89, 205, 225-26, 285; criminal career of, 207-18), Manuel Noriega (269), Hippolytus (325), and Aristides the Just (12, 325). Subtract a hundred free copies sent to a hundred prominent people mentioned in the book; multiply that by the price; and divide by two for the publisher's share of the sale price. The IPI for *All By Myself* comes to something like $2,044.87. What must publishers be thinking?

MAUREEN DOWD (60, 61) covered the 1988 campaign for the *New York Times*.



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Saving the Elephants

BY JED PERL

The Art of Babar: The Work of Jean and Laurent de Brunhoff by Nicholas Fox Weber

(Abrams, 191 pp., $39.95)

One of the marvelous things about classic children's books is that we intersect with them in different ways at different points in our lives. The book that we first encounter as a young listener we may later read to a younger sibling and later still to our own child or grandchild or to the children of friends. Books that have been out of one's consciousness for a decade or more resurface; we have a chance to see how our reactions stack up against our memories. And sometimes adults are drawn to children's books that they didn't know when they were kids. This can be a way of upgrading one's own memories; by reading Antonie de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince* for the first time as an adult, one can live vicariously the classic childhood one never actually had. How many people who only encountered *Winnie the Pooh* when they were too old for it are determined that their kids will have it at the right moment?

Of course, our images of picture book childhoods change; different children's books suit the moods of different times. If *Alice in Wonderland*, with its druggy transmogrifications and its irrational tyrants, fit the mood of the 1960s, can it be any surprise that the Babar books, with their genial rulers and stylish manners, became a favorite in the 1980s? This series of books was started by Jean de Brunhoff in 1931 and later picked up by his son Laurent, the author and the illustrator of most of the Babars. It looms pretty large in the 1980s nostalgia boom. The Mary Ryan Gallery on New York City's Columbus Avenue, that great thoroughfare of yuppiedom, sells the original drawings; and there are slews of ancillary products, of T-shirts, pull toys, calendars, and the like.

The Babar stories, with their crystal-clear views of an idyllic pre-World War I world—a world of refined manners and pretty tea parties and amusing outings that have their bad twists but always turn out fine—fit right into the yuppie yen for old-fashioned family living. Some people are offended by what they see as the commercialization of Babar; but I'm not so sure that Babar's aura is diluted by commercialization. It's cheering to see Babar and Celeste popping up in shop windows all over town. So much of what the current back-to-tradition nostalgia boom presents is faceless stuff. The Ralph Lauren outfits and the bleached-pine furniture give a chilly, hollowed-out view of earlier times. And the advertisements for many of these products suggest that it's not the pleasures but the repressions that people are really nostalgic for.

Babar carries us into a different past, a past that's not only privileged and refined, but also full-bodied, a past that hasn't had the blood leeched out of it. The de Brunhoffs, father and son, use placid, balloon-like lines to limn their beautifully appointed kingdom. They laugh at this never-never land even as they use it to seduce us. They tap into our nostalgia for order, but theirs is a nostalgia for a natural order.

De Brunhoff's first book, *The Story of Babar*, opens with a pastoral vision of the baby elephant Babar living with his mother in the jungle. But almost at once Babar's mother is shot by a hunter; and the little elephant flees the jungle, finding his way to a city that looks a lot like Paris. There he is taken up by an Old Lady who gives him a place to live and sponsors his entrance into society. Babar takes to wearing fine clothes and walking on his hind legs; he enjoys cutting a figure in the fashionable world, though there are moments when he's nostalgic for the life of the jungle. His cousins Arthur and Celeste come to visit him in the city, and he teaches them the sophisticated ways.

By the end of the book, Babar is engaged to Celeste and has returned to the jungle, where the King of the Elephants has just died. Babar, who impresses the jungle elephants with his elegant city ways, is crowned king. By the third book, *Babar the King*, which appeared in 1933, the elephant city of Celestville is being transformed into a model of urban civilization, with compact, comfortable housing developments and grand parks and public buildings. The next major event in Babar's and Celeste's lives—described in the last book that Jean de Brunhoff wrote, *Babar and His Children* (published posthumously in 1938)—is the birth of the triplets: Pom, Flora, and Alexander. By then the basic pattern of the world according to Babar is in place. The rest of the series consists of variations on familiar themes: visitors arrive in Celestville or the King and his family go on travels; difficulties and disturbances arise within the kingdom or beyond its borders; life goes on.

With Babarmania at an all-time high, the appearances of a book called *The Art of Babar* isn't a surprise. The surprise is that this coffee-table book on a trendy subject is a real book, an intellectual accomplishment. Nicholas Fox Weber, an art critic, curator, and executive director of the Josef Albers Foundation, has written a text that answers all the questions readers may have had about Jean and Laurent de Brunhoff and their books. He links the imaginary milieu of Celestville to the real milieu of the French haute bourgeoisie in the early part of the century, and we end up understanding both a little better.

The Art of Babar is also a big step forward for its author. In a monograph on the contemporary painter Leland Bell, published a couple of years ago, Weber's cheerfully enthusiastic approach was a liability. It's impossible to write about the current art scene effectively if you believe, as Weber apparently does, that the world is basically a just and rational place; an hour in the art galleries ought to have told you otherwise. Weber doesn't really understand that an artist now has to be a sort of monster of self-assurance to keep his integrity intact. But Weber's upbeat worldview works for him in *The Art of Babar*. I don't suppose that anybody who didn't believe that the world was a just and rational place could write well about these imaginary elephants.

Of course the series has its dark side. The death of Babar's mother at the hands of a hunter in the first book is a primal horror. After that there are panics and bad moments. And when Weber is dealing with some of the series' less pleasant aspects—I am thinking of the caricatured depictions of blacks—he acts as if what makes us uncomfortable were somehow an accident, when the world of privilege that the de Brunhoff family inhabited and that King Babar inhabits is rooted in the inequalities of an unjust world. Why deny it? The beauty of the Babar books is that they're not totally insulated from the life we live: this idyll is open-ended enough to register the impact of the parties of 1930s Paris, the supermarkets of 1960s Ameri-

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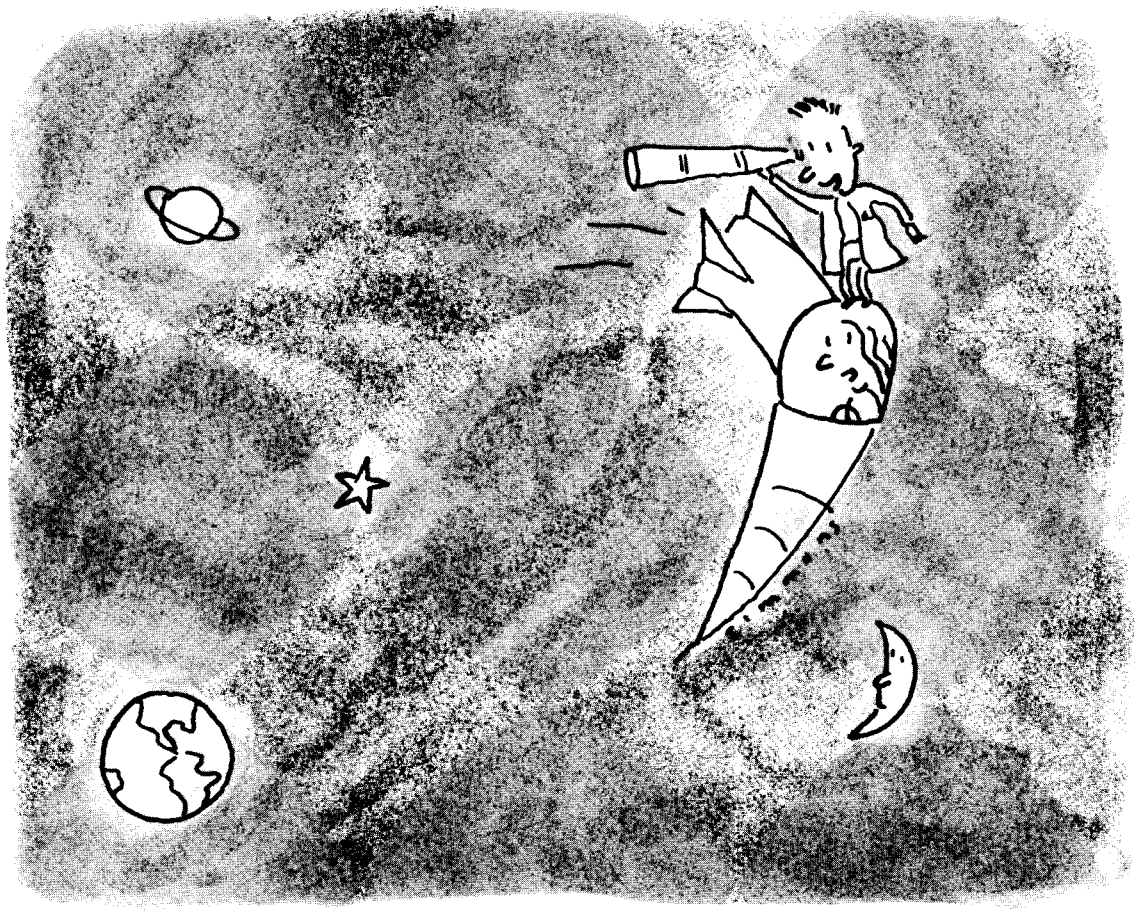

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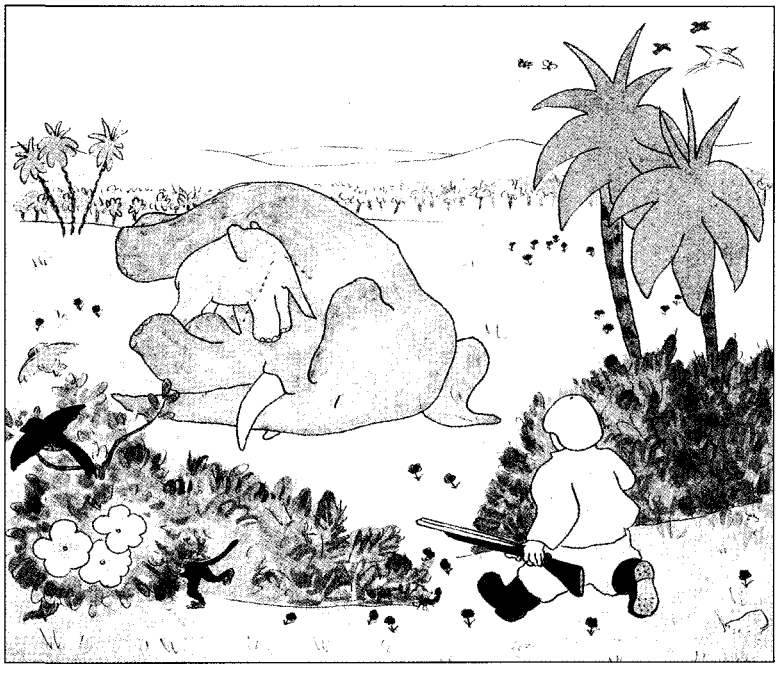
ca. The basic theme is one of continuation. The endings are happy. The genial tone of Weber's prose suggests that he has a taste for ease and unpretentious luxury. Weber feels right at home in Celestville.

Weber's book shows how King Babar, his family, and his subjects emerged out of the collective imagination of several prosperous and artistically oriented Parisian families. Around the turn of the century, Jean de Brunhoff's father was a publisher of illustrated books; he did some opulent programs for the Ballets Russes and produced a book about the set designs of Bakst. Jean studied painting with Othon Friesz at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière. There he befriended Emile Sabouraud, known as Mio, whose father was a well-known doctor and whose family were earlier admirers of Proust's novel and had paintings by Soutine, Renoir, and Redon hanging on their walls. Mio described Jean as "the most beautiful young man one could ever see." Weber quotes him as saying, "You can't speak of Jean without mentioning his reserve and his aristocratic outlook and behavior. Jean was as tactful as a man could be. He could speak to anyone—from the gardener to the pope—and be completely simple and natural and close to them." Sabouraud's pianist sister, Cécile, became Jean's wife; and they had three boys: Laurent, Mathieu, and Thierry.

"Jean was unable to make a living as a painter," Weber explains, "but both the Sabourauds and the de Brunhoffs supported him and Cécile with a modest allowance. The older generation was happy to subsidize the young creators." The young family's life alternated between an apartment in Paris, the Sabouraud family place in the country in Chessy, and visits to the Alps. Weber's book is illustrated with snapshots of picnics, of family members silhouetted against Alpine snow. The faces are open, casually happy. The Babar books began as a story that Cécile told to her two sons. Jean decided to illustrate a copy for the family; his cousins, publishers, decided to print it; and Jean then produced six other Babars.

The post-World War I world that Weber lovingly describes doesn't sound all that different from the pre-World War I world that we glimpse in the snapshots by the adolescent photographer Jacques Henri Lartigue. The young century found some of its sharpest chroniclers among the young and those who spoke to the young. Lartigue shows how new fashions and new machines (cars, airplanes) make ripples on the calm surface of Parisian life, ripples that ware strong enough to keep things interesting but not strong enough to wreck things. Lartigue's camera catches women in whimsical hats and men playing with kites. People don't grow up: their toys just get grown-up sized. Babar's world has that quality, too. Celestville is a perpetual childhood.

Years later Laurent recalled his parents and their relatives as "a bit like Sèvres figurines: beautiful, unblemished, and more for observation than intimacy." The idyll ended when Jean died of bone tuberculosis in 1937. "The 33-year-old widow did her best to raise three boys, but life would never again be the same. A year after her husband died at the age of 37, her father—the beloved grandfather with the house in Chessy—died as well. Then came the war and the occupation of Paris: years of struggle and privation. But in 1946 Babar was resurrected." Laurent, a painter like his father before him, produced his first Babar book, *Babar's Cousin: That Rascal Arthur.* "Since then he has taken Babar to distant planets, to California, and underground." The final snapshot in Weber's book shows Cécile, now a carefully coiffured lady with several strands of pearls at her neck, accompanying her son Laurent through a Babar exhibit in the Marais in 1981.



THE DEATH OF BABAR'S MOTHER (1931)

Weber illustrates a few of Jean's oil paintings, mostly family portraits. The style, a classicizing naturalism very popular in the 1920s and 1930s, is modeled on the work of Renoir and Derain. But Jean doesn't bring anything of his own to this work. He is a middle-of-the-road painter, at his best when at his sketchiest, as in a little painting of the Sabouraud house in Chessy. Perhaps he's one of those artists who confuse seriousness with laboriousness; or maybe it's just laziness. Whatever the reason, he only becomes a first-rate artist when he does something that he probably doesn't regard as serious—when he illustrates a story that his wife has written for his children. Weber writes that the style in the Babar books gives the appearance of both effortlessness and knowledge. It has the naturalness that has made other ingenuous sophisticates—Henri Rousseau, Gabriele Munter, Alfred Wallis—the envy of their compatriots. De Brunhoff painted by instinct. He emerges the master of poignant summation. Well-being, plainly articulated, pervades. Here [in *The Story of Babar*] are quintessential palm trees, the mark of tropical luxury. Masses of red flowers and a single butterfly, establish the opulence of earthly life. Entering the story, the reader—or child to whom the story is being read—leaves all haze and incertitude behind.

Jean leaves behind all the incertitude of his oil paintings, too. He had admired the work of Raoul Dufy when he was a student; and at times the Babar illustrations recall Dufy's upbeat lyricism.

Jean de Brunhoff made his contribution to French art through the side door of book illustration. Maurice Sendak, in an appreciation of the Babar books, relates them to a turn-of-the-century explosion in book illustration. But the casually looping lines in the Babars also call to mind the illustrations that Matisse and Dufy and others had been doing since the 1920s, when many French artists turned their attention to illustration, an art with its own logic and laws. In place of the fixed frame of the painting, the book illustrator works amid a fluid framework of unfolding pages. The turn of a page is the occasion for a surprise; the full-page illustration and the vignette enclosed by areas of text can be juxtaposed with the expansiveness of the double-page spread.

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Jean, who wrote out the Babar texts in script that echoes the loops of his drawıgs, has a genius for the rhythms of the ook. He composes across the page and p and down the page and uses the doule page for panoramic effects—all with magical self-assurance. And his feeling or the big movements is joined to a eautiful poetic sense of the value of nall naturalistic details. Here he recalls 9th-century French illustrators of daily fe such as Gavarni and Guy, and, reachıg farther back, the panoramic vistas ıat the Limbourg Brothers invented to lustrate a Renaissance Book of Hours.

In both his pictures and his texts, Jean uses the modern taste for simplification to create a quality of naive welleing. There's something of the mandan simplicity of pioneer moderns such as ean Cocteau, Erik Satie, and Gertrude tein in these lush yet severe children's ooks. Just as Jean de Brunhoff's drawıgs suggest emotions—anger, anxiety—ırough a couple of lines, his texts are elatively impassive, alluding to fears or ıxieties or joys only in passing. Characrs aren't exactly constructed and elabrated: they're just presented, and life oes on. The absence of sentimentality is hat gives these books their staying pow-. They leave us free to feel what we ant to feel.

Jean's work in the Babar books is altoether modern, yet it fulfills what we ofn regard as a premodern desire: the dere to give art the fullness of life. In some markable passages of social history, eber places Babar within the fashionle Parisian life of the 1920s and 1930s:

> In the year that Babar was conceived, the great American chronicler of Paris life, Janet Flanner, wrote that "the June season of 1930 will be remembered as the greatest fancy-dress-ball season of all years." Jean and Cécile de Brunhoff were aware of such events even if they never left the quiet rooms of Chessy or the small flat in the 16th arrondissement to attend them.... "The 1930 Parisian parties—by being unusually frequent, fantastic, and mostly foreign, were remarkable for representing the true spirit of their time." Women dressed as men, whites as blacks. At a party given by the dressmaker Jean Patou, where each twig in the garden was wrapped in silver paper, three lion cubs were given as grab-bag prizes. At a masquerade many of the guests appeared as shepherds and shepherdesses, and one came as a wolf in sheep's clothing. That same season, Josephine Baker's new Casino show featured trained pigeons, a live cheetah, and a gorilla who rescued her from a typhoon. It was quite natural to have an elephant go to the city, dine in a good house, and dress like an upper-class human. Jungle creatures had never before been so at home in urban settings.

In the Babar books the beau monde is domesticated, crossbred with the quiet family life that for the de Brunhoff and Sabouraud clans must have been a precious link back to the 19th century.

Some of Weber's finest pages are devoted to the difference between the work of the father and the son. Where Jean has a refined sense of detail, Laurent, who was an abstract painter in the 1940s (and a better painter than his father, from the evidence of the work included here), tends toward bolder, more generalizing designs. Jean's color is restrained: tans and grays set off areas of strong hue. Laurent's color is more eccentric; he revels in surprising sweet-and-sour combinations. Of *Babar's Visit to Bird Island* (the third of Laurent's books), Weber observes that the illustrations have "a second-generation freedom and spontaneity. Laurent's application of paint is looser, and seemingly less painstaking, than in his own early work or in any of his father's.... Landscape and characters are a bit more fantastic.... Jean's focusing on nuance has now been supplanted, even more than in Laurent's previous two books, by the probing of raw emotion."

I happen to have a first edition of *Bird Island*, in the oversized 10½-by-14½-inch format, and it is everything that Weber says it is. Turning the page onto a two-page spread one feels a rush of emotion. The rescue of Flora, whose boat has capsized, is lyrical high drama: the curving white sails of the boats, set off by the great expanse of blue sea, create a rocking motion across the page that's as exciting as the movements in a print by Hiroshige.

Laurent isn't just continuing his father's work; he's expanding Babar's dominion. He makes enough alterations in the period details and the plot lines to keep the series contemporary. While Babar remains the sort of monarch that most of Europe did away with generations ago, he's unafraid of new experiences. In *Babar Comes to America* (1965), "He becomes absorbed by baseball games, the supermarket, factories, a barbecue, superhighways, a drive-in movie. In its keen-eyed response to neon, highway-strip America and in its appreciation of commercial culture, [*Babar Comes To America*] is akin to both Pop Art and Postmodernist architecture although its tone is far more mellow."

Though some of his formal descriptions go on too long, Weber successfully takes the Babar story from the Roaring '20s to the Postmodern '80s, and shows us how, at every point, the books turn contemporary style into picture-book idyll. He makes us understand why Babar

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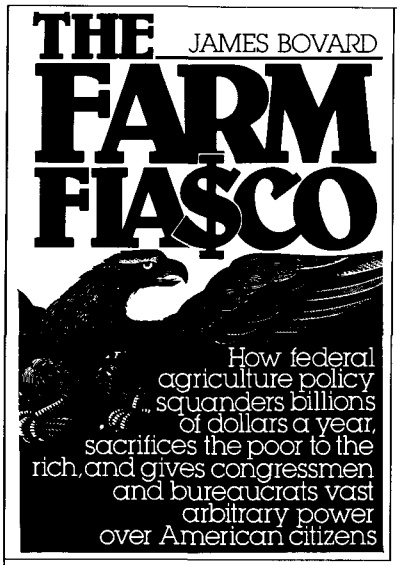
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JED PERL is the author of *Paris Withou End: On French Art Since World War* (North Point Press).

CORRESPONDENCE *continued from page*

the bill to redesign U.S. coins paints misleading picture about the benefits c this legislation, both financial and aes thetic. It is indeed accurate that thi legislation would provide revenue c $366 million resulting from seigniorage the profit difference between a coin' production cost and its face value. Te of the last 13 changes have resulted in 51 percent additional demand due to th public's habit of keeping newly designe coins as souvenirs.

Although you blithely dismiss the per ny, last year the U.S. Mint produce 10.5 billion pennies and made a seignior age profit of $30 million. The Mint est mates that 17.8 billion pennies will b produced in 1989. This means a se gniorage profit of $50 million.

The legislation will not make coin "less appealing and various." Aesthetic is another major reason why the bill er joys such enormous support. (It alread has passed the Senate unanimously fou times. It currently enjoys the co-spor sorship of over 60 percent of th House. Passage is expected shortly Coins are pieces of sculpture we hol every day. The images on coins shoul be instantly recognizable, powerful sym bols of a society's ideals. Coins trave the world for generations to come a ambassadors of that society. Coins hav been changed 33 times before in ou nation's history. This is the longest pe riod of time we have gone without change.

DIANE WOLF
The Commission of Fine Arts
Washington, D.C.

The editors welcome correspondence fron readers. Letters should include the writer full name, address, and telephone number; b typed double-spaced; and be held to unde 200 words. Letters may be edited for spac Please address letters to: Correspondence TNR, 1220 19th Street, N.W., Washingtor D.C. 20036.

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Troubling questions

I RECENTLY RETURNED TO WASHington after living in England for a couple of years, and I'll confess that the thing I miss most is British television. Of course, some of it is famously dull, like "A Man and His Dog," which features, believe it or not, competitive shepherding every Sunday evening. The high point of the season is the all-Britain competition, in which English, Welsh, Scottish, and Irish rustics race to see who can get nine sheep into a pen the fastest. The first time I watched it, I thought it was "Monty Python." Then there are the hours of live snooker, a sophisticated version of bumper pool that makes pro bowling look like a great spectator sport. But at its best, British television casts doubt on the tenet that the tube is an intrinsically brainless medium. I'm not just thinking of *Brideshead Revisited* or *Fawlty Towers*, but of the first-rate news and public affairs programming. In Britain, watching the seven o'clock ITV news is a viable alternative to reading a daily newspaper. And in place of docudramas like *The Final Days*, the BBC shows documentaries on historical and political topics like Pearl Harbor and the My Lai massacre—proof that frothy narrative isn't the only way to vivify events. The chat shows are better still. On a Friday night you might catch George Steiner and Annie Cohen-Solal talking about anti-Semitism and literature with the likable Clive James on "The Late Show." That's not to say that British TV is relentlessly worthy: you get "L.A. Law" and "thirtysomething" too. British telly is good for reasons that are hard to accept: state support, insulation from competitive pressure, and its cultural elitism. I don't have an answer to Rupert Murdoch, who argues that the public should watch whatever it wants whenever it wants instead of being patronized by Oxbridge highbrows. But judging from the tepid response to his new satellite network Sky Channel—which airs a lot of Charles Bronson shoot-'em-ups—most viewers have better taste than Murdoch imagines. He can hardly give the receiving dishes away. Like me, most people would rather watch "A Man and His Dog."

IN AMERICA WE FIGHT PHILISTINism by legislating against it. The House subcommittee that earlier this year held hearings on banning "colorization" of old movies is currently considering a measure sponsored by Representative Robert W. Kastenmeier of Wisconsin to protect the "moral rights" of artists. This would mean a right to claim or disclaim authorship, and to prevent mutilations or destruction of artworks even after they are sold. The House panel heard testimony from a number of self-pitying artists who had suffered calamities of this sort. One who had a sense of humor about it, however, was Kenneth Snelson, who told a funny story about the conversion to scrap metal of a huge aluminum and stainless-steel structure he erected at the 1964 New York World's Fair. Under the proposed law, Snelson would have been able to sue to prevent its demolition, or claim restitution if the owners snuffed it without asking him. One sympathizes with artists whose work is insufficiently appreciated by greedy recyclers, but there is something outrageous in creative arc-welders who demand that the public not only pay for their works, but admire them in situ for eternity. Had HR 2690 been law a few years ago, the litigious Richard Serra might have won his battle against the General Services Administration and the people of lower Manhattan to leave his despised "Tilted Arc" rusting in Federal Plaza. (In fact, a New York state law that prohibits destruction of art might have saved Serra's creation had it not stood on a federal enclave). The bill also applies to private ownership of art. Even the lucky bidder who recently won Roy Lichtenstein's "Torpedo . . . Los!" at Christie's for $5.5 million would have no right to slash it under the Kastenmeier proposal. This is largely a non-issue: few collectors care to trash valuable paintings. But in rare cases where they do, there's often a reason. When Diego Rivera was commissioned to paint a mural in the lobby of Rockefeller Center in 1933, he daringly added a head of Lenin. This was a ballsy move. And it took *cojones*, too, for John D. Rockefeller to obliterate the fresco after paying good money for it. It was, however, his capitalist privilege. For Rivera to claim legal protection for this slap in the face would have undone the gesture. You can't bait the bourgeoisie while clinging to momma's skirts.

I WAS DELIGHTED TO RUN INTO my colleague Jefferson Morley's old friend J. William Medley at a Sperling breakfast earlier this week. Informally known as the dean of the Washington press corps, Medley is the author of the influential syndicated opinion column "The View From Here," which appears in 322 newspapers nationwide, and hosts the lively television discussion program "Opinion Barrage," which can be seen on the Fox Network. Medley was agitated about what wags in this town are calling *l'affaire Ornstein*. "I arrived at my office this morning to find messages on my desk from television, newspaper, and magazine reporters," the thoughtful Pulitzer Prize-winning commentator told me. "Every call was about Norm Ornstein." What reporters wanted to know was why a highly respected political scientist had agreed to put on a $1,695 beige silk tuxedo and pose with a dishy model on the cover of the November issue of Washington *Dossier*. How, at a time when the Capital's obsession with scandal has reached an all-time high, could AEI's oft-quoted resident scholar have allowed himself to be caught in the compromising position of peering down her sequined gown for a feature on "evening wear with style"? The event raised other new and troubling questions. Would this harm the career of one of the brightest young stars inside the Beltway? "I don't think he's done anything to call his earlier reputation into question," Medley added judiciously. "But no one has acted responsibly in this process. There's plenty of blame to go around."

JOHN SILBER IS TURNING HIMSELF into the Robert Bork of higher education. The pugnacious president of Boston University has long regarded people who don't like him as exemplars of growing moral relativism, irrationality, and decadence. But now Silber's enemies have gone too far. They have proved Western Civilization to be in terminal decline by not buying his book *Straight Shooting: What's Wrong with America and How to Fix It*. The volume is a tired screed against homosexuals, the media, and BU historian Howard Zinn, who survives as a lone dissident in Silber's academic Albania, but never mind that now. Silber sees his book's failure to make the best-seller list as a grim portent for democracy. "I don't think very many people even understand how to read a book like this because they have been so corrupted by television. . . . They don't understand that there is such a thing as rational discussion," he told an interviewer from the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. And speaking of rational discussion: "Is it all right with you if I have intellectual interests? Is it all right with you that I've devoted my life to trying to educate young Americans? Is it all right with you if I am very serious in my concern about the problems facing America and I would like to contribute what little bit I can to the enlightenment and to the moral redirectioning of this country?" Fine with me, dude. But is it all right with you if I read something else?

JACOB WEISBERG

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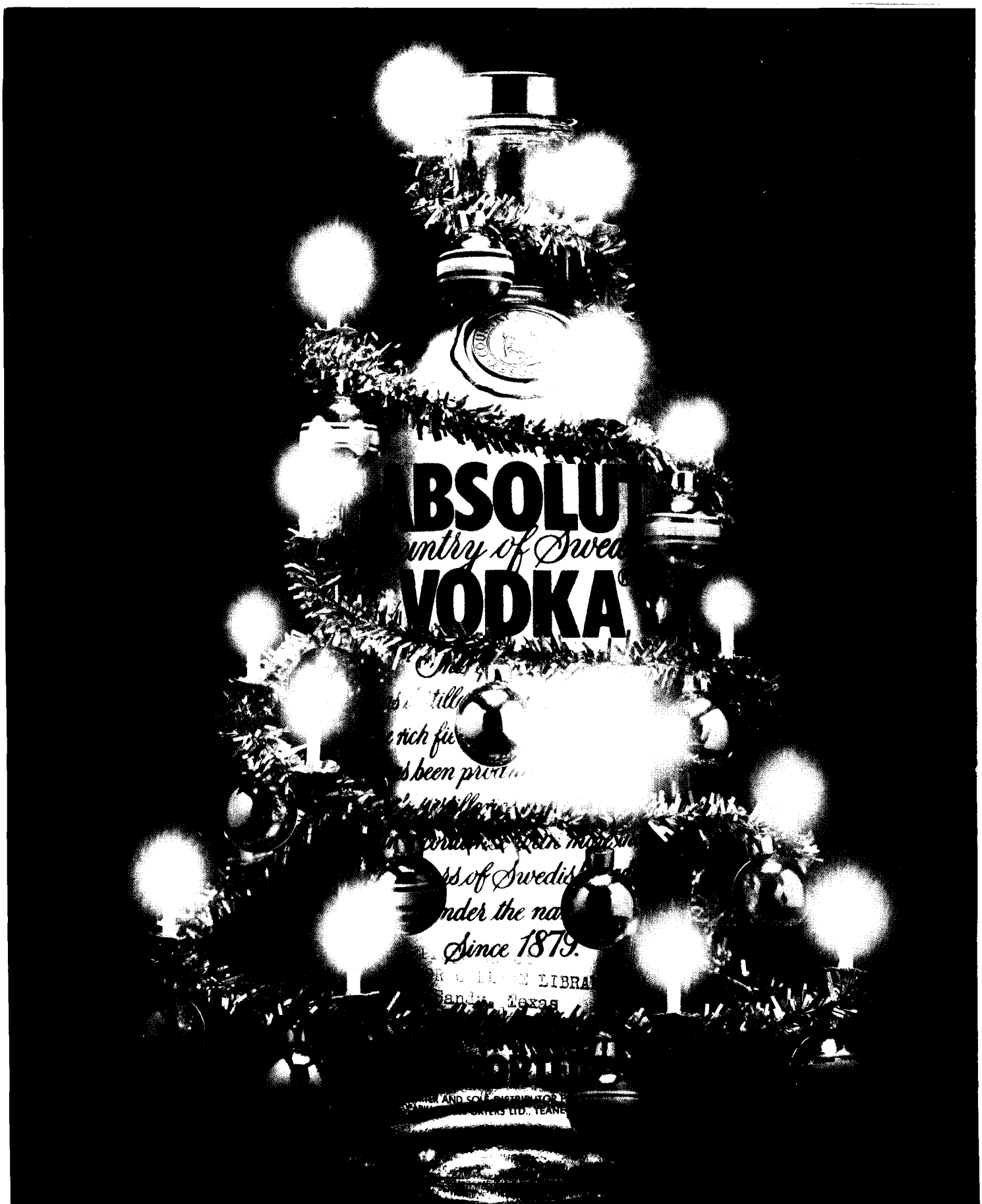

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